

**STAVANGER SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY**

**WORKING WITNESS**

**COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS ON MISSION IN WORD AND DEED IN NEPAL IN  
THE NORWEGIAN MISSION HIMALPARTNER'S MAGAZINE *TIBETANEREN***

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

What is the relationship between words and deeds in Christian mission, and how do specific mission communities reflect on that question in their daily lives? This thesis is an exploration of the intersection between faith, practice and theological reflection in the lives of people involved in a Norwegian mission society, HimalPartner.

Some of the questions prompting this thesis are ancient, and some have become particularly relevant for this generation. What are the motivations for mission, and what should they be? What does it mean to follow Jesus? What does a Christian response to worldwide suffering, poverty, and injustice look like? What is the relationship between evangelism and social involvement in a Christian theology of mission?

Despite the fact that these questions are vital to Christian mission practice, there are relatively few studies on how mission societies themselves actually approach and reflect on these questions. Yet it is important to consider how real individuals and communities reflect on their attempts to live the gospel in addition to creating normative theories, and such practical contextual reflections can yield important insights that can inform more abstract theological thinking. The Norwegian mission HimalPartner in Nepal is uniquely suited as a case study for exploring the issue of word and deed in mission. As "working missionaries" with a strong diaconal practice in a country officially closed to verbal evangelism, members of the mission have been tackling the question of the relationship of word and deed in mission in practice as a community for over 60 years.

## 1.2 Research Question and Structure of the Thesis

My research questions are as follows: What key theological themes relating to word and deed in mission do contributors to HimalPartner's magazine *Tibetaneren* bring up in their reflections of mission work in Nepal in the past ten years? What major theological assumptions and questions emerge about the relationship between evangelism and social involvement? Finally, the analysis will consider how HimalPartner's community theology of word and deed relates to the mission's context, and how it compares to and potentially

challenges perspectives from the global discussion about mission in word and deed presented in Chapter 2.

This first chapter presents the research question and an outline of the thesis. It will then introduce the thesis' subject--Norwegian mission organization HimalPartner, the source-mission magazine *Tibetaneren*--and research methods. The chapter concludes with some reflections on research challenges and the role of the researcher.

Chapter 2 will provide an international theological context for the question of word and deed in mission, and provide some theoretical structures for analysis of the magazine articles. Chapter 3 describes specific practical context that the mission members respond to and reflect on in their *Tibetaneren* articles--the roots and context of HimalPartner mission itself in Norway, and the context of Nepal's church history. Chapter 4 presents the research and examples of different theological reflections on the nature and practice of mission in word and deed in Nepal in *Tibetaneren*. Chapter 5 considers the perspectives from *Tibetaneren* in the light of the background material: the specific context and the abstract theological categories from Chapter 2. The thesis will conclude with reflections on how the research has answered the research question.

### *1.2.1 Subject: The Norwegian mission organization HimalPartner*

The Norwegian mission organization HimalPartner was started in 1938 by a group of Norwegians who felt called by God to witness to the gospel of Jesus in the Himalayan region.<sup>1</sup> As I will explain in Chapter 3, restrictions in Nepal have made one traditional form of mission, the sending out of pastors and professional evangelists, impossible for HimalPartner. What Nepal desperately wanted and needed were doctors, midwives, engineers, and other people with technical expertise. HimalPartner became an "yrkesmisjon--"working mission"--of professionals. Some like to call it the "engineer's mission," for along with healthcare and social work the mission has worked much with industrial and hydropower development. Within the mission there has always been a wide spectrum of thought about the nature of mission and the relationship between service and evangelism.

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<sup>1</sup>HimalPartner, "Strategi 2010-2014," 3. Available from [http://www.HimalPartner.no/images/stories/Om\\_HimalPartner\\_/Formelle\\_dokumenter/HP\\_strategi-web.pdf](http://www.HimalPartner.no/images/stories/Om_HimalPartner_/Formelle_dokumenter/HP_strategi-web.pdf). Internet; accessed May 6, 2011.

HimalPartner is a small mission society by Norwegian standards, with 16 active branches around the country.<sup>2</sup> Like many mission societies in Norway, the mission is organizationally and financially independent, but holds to the confession of the evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway. There is a small paid staff in Oslo, and the mission is run mostly by volunteers.<sup>3</sup>

During the time period I will write about, HimalPartner supported 33 missionaries in Nepal at various points and for various periods of time. There was a range of 6 to 15 HimalPartner missionaries in Nepal every year. Currently, the mission is focusing on mental health activism, education and industrial and technical development in the Himalayas.<sup>4</sup> In addition to sending personnel, the mission also supports some projects in Nepal logistically and financially. Members and supporting churches live in many parts of Norway. It has been the spiritual home of some extraordinary, dedicated individuals.

In this thesis I will analyze articles about mission in Nepal published in *Tibetaneren* during the past ten years, 2000-2010. The time frame both allows us to hear what current mission members have to say about the relationship of word and deed in mission, and gives insight into Christian mission in Nepal during a particularly interesting phase of transition. During the past ten years, HimalPartner itself has gone through a number of important changes. In this ten-year period, the mission has become more involved in development projects in the Tibetan region of China. An increasing portion of each magazine has been devoted to Chinese news and reports. The mission changed general secretaries in 2000 and again in 2009.<sup>5</sup> In 2009, the mission sent 7 new missionaries to Nepal.<sup>6</sup>

Last year (2010), the mission general assembly voted to change its name from Tibetmisjon to HimalPartner, at the request of missionaries working in China who found the old name led to misunderstandings. To avoid confusion, I have only used the new name in this thesis. When translating from Norwegian, I have translated the old name Tibetmisjon as HimalPartner.

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<sup>2</sup>HimalPartner, "Strategi 2010-2014," 3.

<sup>3</sup>HimalPartner, "Strategi 2010-2014," 3.

<sup>4</sup>HimalPartner, "Strategi 2010-2014," 4.

<sup>5</sup> Both new general secretaries were women, unusual in mission Norway. Bjørn Lyngroth, "Møtet med enkeltmennesker/Meeting Individuals," *Tibetaneren*, 2009.4, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Grethe Raddum, "Leder: Syv nye utsendinger/Leader: Seven new missionaries," *Tibetaneren*, 2009.4, 2.

### 1.2.2 Source: *Tibetaneren Magazine*

One of the things that has united the diverse supporters of HimalPartner is the mission magazine, *Tibetaneren*. Since 1939<sup>7</sup>, HimalPartner has published a printed magazine for its members and supporters, like many other mission societies in Norway.

*Tibetaneren* is roughly bimonthly, with about 6 issues a year. Each magazine has 16 to 19 pages. It is definitely a magazine for readers. The greater part of the magazine is text articles, illustrated by large color photographs, boxes with "quick facts" and occasional maps and charts. Articles in the magazine are usually at least half a page in length, and each issue has several longer articles of two pages or more.

The magazine has a clear Christian profile—of the ten years of magazines I looked through, over half of the articles were related to or referenced the Christian gospel. The contents of *Tibetaneren* can be divided by content into four categories. The first are letters and articles written by missionaries or former missionaries about their experiences in Nepal. The second are articles by members about mission in Nepal--this is the broadest category, and includes news updates, project descriptions, travel journals and reflections on the nature of mission. The third is the "leader" column that always comes first in the magazine, where the general secretary, the chairman of the mission board, or others in the administration give a message of encouragement, often related to recent mission news. The fourth is the *andakt* or devotional, a short passage in every magazine of reflections on a Bible verse, written by a member of the mission or occasionally a guest.

While HimalPartner works in several regions of the Himalayas, and a varying proportion of each issue of *Tibetaneren* is devoted to this work, this thesis will focus on articles written specifically about the mission's work in Nepal. Mission in Nepal provides a particularly fascinating case study for the theological issue of words and deeds in mission. In the interests of clarity, it made sense to focus on a single specific context rather than attempt to compare the mission's work and theology in several different regions. In addition, the situation of increasing religious freedom in Nepal makes it possible both for the magazine sources and my writing to be relatively open about Christian mission strategy and practice in Nepal.

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<sup>7</sup> Olav Uglem, *Norsk Misjonshistorie*, Oslo, Norway: Lunde, 1979, 197.

### 1.2.3 Audience: Who reads *Tibetaneren*?

The magazine is available in print for subscribers, and since 2007 has also been available online to the general public. The magazine is in Norwegian, a small language with around 5 million native speakers.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the target audience of *Tibetaneren* is in one sense quite specific.

While it may seem remarkable for the mission to have a print magazine as a key method of communication in an age of blogs, reading print books and newspapers continues to be an important part of daily life for most Norwegians.<sup>9</sup> Norwegian culture is definitely what ethnographers might call a "literate culture."<sup>10</sup> Researcher Lisbeth Mikaelsson describes Norwegian mission literature as its own nonfiction literary system, "with its own special norms, authors, publishers, bookstores and readers."<sup>11</sup> HimalPartner as an organization is perhaps even more literate than most. My impression, both from reading *Tibetaneren* and from attending mission meetings and meeting members is that HimalPartner is a group of people to whom words and formulations are very important.<sup>12</sup> Several recent missionaries with HimalPartner mentioned that reading *Tibetaneren* had been important in their process of deciding to become a missionary.<sup>13</sup>

*Tibetaneren* is not the only way that members of HimalPartner send and exchange information about the mission, as missionary Evelyn Mollestad pointed out in an interview.<sup>14</sup> The mission has a number of other official forms of communication: a website, a downloadable free online copy of *Tibetaneren*, prayer calendars and project booklets, and

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<sup>8</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, "Norway," available from <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/420178/Norway>> Internet, accessed 13 May, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> According to a survey by Statistics Norway for the time period 2001-2009, while the number of Norwegians who read news online increased dramatically, the majority of Norwegians still read paper newspapers. Statistics Norway, "Fortsatt økende avislesing på Internett/ Continued increase in online newspaper readership," available from <[http://www.ssb.no/vis/magasinet/slik\\_lever\\_vi/art-2010-04-12-01.html](http://www.ssb.no/vis/magasinet/slik_lever_vi/art-2010-04-12-01.html)> Internet, accessed 13 May, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: principles in practice* (3rd ed, London: Routledge, 2007,) 123.

<sup>11</sup> Lisbeth Mikaelsson, "Fortellinger om Kallet/Stories about the Call," in *Med hjertet på flere steder: om barn, misjon og flerkulturelt oppvekst/With a heart in more than one place: on children, mission and multicultural upbringing*, (ed. T. Sundnes-Drønen and M. Skjortnes, Trondheim, Norway: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2010,) 285.

<sup>12</sup> For example, at the HimalPartner winter meeting in February 2010, mission member Odd Hoftun started his Bible study by rewording and redefining the meeting's theme to better reflect his understanding of a Bible reference--from "An instrument of God" to "An instrument of the Lord."

<sup>13</sup> Conversation with Evelyn and Gunnar Mollestad, current HimalPartner missionaries, in Tansen, Nepal, 24 January, 2011; see also Odd Aksnes, interview with Kjartan Gullbrå in "Forbereder seg til Innsats i Nepal/Preparing to make an effort in Nepal," *Tibetaneren*, 2001.4, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Conversation with Evelyn and Gunnar Mollestad, 24 January, 2011.



email updates, to name a few. Missionaries and members are also asked to write speeches, lead Bible studies and give sermons, and participate in mission conferences. In addition, missionaries and members themselves do a good deal of informal personal communication about the life of the mission. Many current missionaries have their own blogs, and virtually all send personal letters to friends and family with news, updates, and thoughts about their lives as missionaries. Thus, *Tibetaneren* is a certain kind of public communication within a much larger, more diverse system of communication. But the magazine is a level of communication that is immediately available to all members of the organization and guests who subscribe or borrow magazines, and as such has a special role. It is perhaps the media form in which the mission community is most fully expressed.

#### *1.2.4 Authors: Who writes for Tibetaneren?*

*Tibetaneren* is a good choice for an exploration of mission theology because it is a real, passionate and relatively unpolished community forum for opinions. *Tibetaneren* is written entirely by individual members. Each article is attributed to a specific person, often with a tag line describing the author's role in the mission. There is obviously a real passionate, diverse, long-term community behind *Tibetaneren*. It immediately provides much more to read between the lines than would a slick brochure written by an advertising bureau.

The writers in *Tibetaneren* represent a large range of ages, job backgrounds and mission experiences. All of the contributors are Norwegian, except for some articles by Nepali people and few missionaries from English-speaking countries. Some contributors, like Asbjørn and Mia Voreland and Odd and Tullis Hoftun, are long-term missionaries that have worked in Nepal for decades. Others, like Evelyn and Gunnar Mollestad and Kjartan and Elisabeth Gullbrå, travelled to Nepal for the first time in the 2000-2010 time period. Other contributors to the magazine have been strongly involved in HimalPartner mission volunteer work in Norway, and some members at home have previously lived or travelled in Nepal.

While there are some differences between reflections written in Nepal and those written from Norway, this study includes both, because the mission is a truly a body in which all parts are important and interconnected. Because HimalPartner is a small community, and many have had a long-term commitment to the mission in various roles, it is difficult to label people according to their role in the mission without telling long stories. In presenting the

research I have noted when I felt it relevant whether a person was an active missionary in Nepal or a member of the mission board, but many members cited have been either or both at some point in time.

For HimalPartner missionaries in the field, writing letters and reports presenting their work for *Tibetaneren* is part of the job description. While editors, board members and mission volunteers are frequent contributors to the mission magazine, all of the issues (with one exception) include articles by current missionaries in Nepal. During the ten-year time period, about 33 active missionaries in Nepal wrote for the mission magazine. About half of these missionaries wrote frequently, contributing more than 5 articles in the 10-year period.

In addition, in *Tibetaneren* 2000-2010 there were 44 articles written by guest writers from other organizations and churches--for example, the mission organization Youth with a Mission, Tent, a tentmaking organization, as well as pastors from the Church of Norway. Many of these articles were quite relevant to the question of this thesis, and it is significant that the guests were asked to write about subjects such as tentmaking, evangelism and the nature of mission. However, since the goal here is to present the conversation about word and deed within HimalPartner mission itself, these guest articles are outside the scope of the research presentation.

## 1.3 Methods

### 1.3.1 Mission Theology

This thesis fits into the academic discipline of mission theology. Mission theology is a branch of missiology, or the “science of mission,” a wide, interdisciplinary field encompassing many kinds of study of Christian mission.<sup>15</sup> Missiology draws both from the Christian theological traditions, historical methods and the social sciences to analyze mission thinking and

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<sup>15</sup> The definition of missiology is debated. One definition is, “Missiology is systematic reflection on the work of mission (usually Christian mission) including the mission or sending of God (Missio Dei) of Jesus Christ, of the apostles, of the church, or of other mission organizations. In the broadest sense it includes the study of the theology of mission (foundation, goal and means) particular mission theories, mission principles and practice, and the social, cultural or political aspects of mission.” From James Scherer, “Missiology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol 3*. (Ed. E. Fahlbusch et al., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999-2008), 553. For more information, see Andrew J. Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999) 7-22; Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 41-56; James A. Scherer, “Missiology as a Discipline and what it includes,” pages 173-187 in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization, Vol 2: Theological Foundations* (Ed. J. A. Scherer, S. B. Bevans, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1994.)

practice.<sup>16</sup> It has a strong connection to the tradition of practical theology, which aims to explore the application of Christian theology in daily life.<sup>17</sup> Practical missiology often focuses on the role of lay Christians in the mission of the church, as this thesis will do.<sup>18</sup>

To answer the research problem, this thesis will use a combination of theological methods and empirical ethnographic methods also used in sociology as tools to analyze the 'everyday theology' of *Tibetaneren*. The book *Ethnography* by Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson has informed my view of autobiographical stories as source documents for empirical research. Hammersley and Atkinson see a renewed emphasis in the social sciences on storytelling and especially on research of personal narratives and autobiography.<sup>19</sup> However, there has been very little academic research done on Christian mission literature and media.

A handful of authors who identify themselves with disciplines other than missiology have written about mission literature as a theological source. Professor John D. Barbour of St. Olaf College has written about theological and moral reflection in autobiography in general.<sup>20</sup> Two Norwegian anthropologists, Kirsti Mosvold and Lisbeth Mikaelsson, have written about specific theological perspectives in Norwegian missionary autobiographies.<sup>21</sup> Both Mosvold and Mikaelsson focus on a theology of call, a concept that is certainly central in Norwegian missionary literature. I have also been inspired in the final writing process by anthropologist Marianne Gullestad's 2007 study of the Norwegian Mission Societies' photos and media about their work in Cameroon, whose work parallels mine in that she looks at general themes in a wide range of mission media.<sup>22</sup> Like Mosvold and Gullestad, I am analyzing the thought of a mission community based on systematic consideration of written sources.

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<sup>16</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, "Preface," in *Missiology and the Social Sciences*, (ed. E. Rommen and G. Corwin: Evangelical Missiological Society Series No 4, William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA, 1996), 1; Kari Storstein Haug, transcript of a lecture given on August 17, 2010 at Research School Religion Values Society Course at Metochi, Lesbos, 12-19 August 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Dietrich Rossler, "Practical Theology," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol 4*. (Ed. E. Fahlbusch et al., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999-2008), 315, 319.

<sup>18</sup> Rossler "Practical Theology," 315.

<sup>19</sup> Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 124.

<sup>20</sup> John D. Barbour. *The Conscience of the Autobiographer: Ethical and Religious Dimensions of Autobiography*. (Great Britain, Biddles Ltd., 1992.)

<sup>21</sup> Mikaelsson, "Fortellinger"; Kirsti Mosvold, *Misjonærkallet i misjonsteologisk perspektiv/The missionary calling from the perspective of mission theology*, (Masters Thesis in Christian Studies, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 1981.)

<sup>22</sup> Marianne Gullestad, *Picturing pity: pitfalls and pleasures in cross-cultural communication: image and word in a North Cameroon mission* (New York: Berghahn: 2007).

One might ask whether "missiology" in the above cases, and in the case of this thesis, is simply a label for sociological research on a mission society in which the author is a Christian. However, the missiological dimensions of my work are significant. As a missiologist, I can have a more critical and normative role, and will analyze the results of the text studies by comparing them with examples of systematic mission theology from other contexts.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.3.2 Text Analysis

The research question of this thesis requires the study and analysis of mission texts. Lay theological writing, and specifically autobiographical articles and letters, have a particularly special place in the Christian foreign mission tradition. Missionaries themselves have made many important contributions to missiology, both in theory and practice.<sup>24</sup> The authors of the articles in *Tibetaneren*, with a few exceptions, would not consider themselves theologians. However, their writing most certainly has both direct theological dimensions and deeper underlying implications. Thus, both my subjects and I are writing missiology.

The mission magazine or newsletter is an old convention. Missionaries for centuries have been writing letters home, soliciting prayer and financial support, describing hardships, relationships and the work of God they've seen. As Mikaelsson points out, there is a wealth of information in mission literature as the authors describe many aspects of their spiritual and personal lives.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps first and foremost, missionary letters can be form of Christian witness in which authors present testimonies of personal experience with a living God. Mission media has also often been an informal source of historical and anthropological documentation, describing remote areas and populations.

There are also more personal motivations for mission writing. Missionaries are people who have left their own culture to live in another one and as such, many need to write about their experiences, both in order to share news with loved ones at home and for the sake of their own sense of identity. In addition to strengthening a sense of continuity, storytelling builds community. In an organization like HimalPartner, where members live in many different parts of Norway and Nepal and rarely meet, written communication is an essential

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<sup>23</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, "Preface," in *Missiology and the Social Sciences*, (ed. E. Rommen and G. Corwin: Evangelical Missiological Society Series No 4, William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA, 1996,) 1.

<sup>24</sup> James A. Scherer "Missiology," 555.

<sup>25</sup> Mikaelsson, *Fortellinger*, 285.

way of creating and sustaining a network of people with common interests, goals, and knowledge.<sup>26</sup>

In the text studies research process, I read through the issues of *Tibetaneren* from the last ten years. I looked for attempts by members of HimalPartner to reflect on Christian mission theology in practice in Nepal, and specifically for different ways of describing a relationship between word and deed in mission. I created a spreadsheet of the magazine articles from 2000-2010, which organized the contents by contributor, type of article and potential theological relevance to my topic.

After identifying and transcribing relevant article passages, I began to look for key themes in the discussion of the nature of mission in word in deed in HimalPartner's work in Nepal, inspired by readings on evangelical theological debates on mission in word and deed.<sup>27</sup> The resulting research categories are not mutually exclusive answers to the same question, but instead various ways of approaching the central question of word and deed that together give a broad picture of HimalPartner's community theology.

### 1.3.3 Why text analysis?

Why study texts from *Tibetaneren* in order to explore the missionaries understanding of word and deed in mission? Why not do, say, an interview study of missionaries? When I asked members of HimalPartner direct theological questions about their thoughts on the nature of mission in word and deed, they gave somewhat cautious and cursory responses. Many people began by saying, "I'm not a theologian..." In *Tibetaneren*, however, members of HimalPartner were much more open about their personal reflections on mission theology. There is a wealth of theological reference and reflection on practice in the magazine. The articles in *Tibetaneren* are narratives, crafted over time—less spontaneous and unguarded than interviews, but deeper and more carefully thought through. For many, it may be easier to share deep convictions and personal reflections about faith in writing than when speaking extemporaneously.

The low reflexivity of *Tibetaneren* as a source was also appealing. I did not impose the writing on the subjects, and they did not intend their answers specifically for me. Rather,

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<sup>26</sup> I will describe more about the culture of Norwegian missions as it relates to this thesis in Chapter 3.

<sup>27</sup> See 2.3 and 2.4.

contributing to the mission magazine is part of their community life. The intended audience of *Tibetaneren* is a large group of fellow missionaries, supporters and interested readers, rather than one student. Thus, in analyzing *Tibetaneren* rather than doing interviews, the research came closer to the ethnographic ideal of studying the community in their “everyday context.”<sup>28</sup>

#### 1.3.4 Community theology

Since the theological focus of the thesis--on word and deed in mission--is quite small, it was important to find a wide range of perspectives and individual voices to give contrast and depth to my picture of the mission's theology. This thesis will emphasize the community, discursive aspect of the mission magazine *Tibetaneren*.

As the Norwegian sociologists point out, it is not only individuals that create missiological documents, but also communities. Lisbeth Mikaelsson references American scholar Stanley Fish's concept of "interpretive communities" in her study of Norwegian mission societies, understanding them as "groups with common interpretive strategies, based on common conventions and systems of norms."<sup>29</sup> The World Council of Churches and Lausanne Movement, worldwide Christian church and mission conferences,<sup>30</sup> are good examples of other communities creating mission theology.

The fact that the magazine is an important part of the mission community gives the articles a special context and filter that personal interviews would lack. Hammersley and Atkinson claim that documents are a crucial part of many social contexts, but one that is often overlooked by researchers.<sup>31</sup> In the case of HimalPartner, it is particularly true that documents are important to the social context of the mission—the magazine plays a strong role in sustaining a community of many missionaries and mission supporters separated by space, time and experience.

Members use articles in *Tibetaneren* as an opportunity to embody their understanding of the function, goal and results of their work in Nepal, and to gather sympathy and support for their cause. But a large degree, mission members seem, in their process of writing for *Tibetaneren*, to be honestly seeking answers to theological questions--answers that they can

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<sup>28</sup> Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Mikaelsson, *Fortellinger*, 285.

<sup>30</sup> Described in 2.2.

<sup>31</sup> Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 121.

*share in practice.*<sup>32</sup> As such, their writing is very valuable because it preserves some of the unanswered questions and unresolved tension--and some of the unifying hope and inspiration--found when theology and practice of mission in word and deed meet in the context of a mission community.

### *1.3.5 Researcher role and potential biases*

As a researcher, I have certain personal background and biases that are important to take into consideration. I believe in the triune God of the Bible and in Jesus Lordship and saving power, and as such I share many of the motivations and beliefs of the people I am researching.

I am an American who has lived in and observed Norwegian culture for a number of years, and am fluent in the Norwegian language. During my time in Norway, I have been involved in mission activities and volunteer work, and been blessed by friendships with many members of HimalPartner. This “field work” provides a rich background for the thesis, but perhaps also a tendency to see HimalPartner's theology in what I consider the most positive light. In January 2011, I spent a month travelling and visiting churches and HimalPartner missionaries in Nepal. One month in Nepal and several years in Norway are not enough to fully understand the social realities of either of these contexts. While the majority of my experience with Christian mission has been with Norwegian mission societies, the United States has its own specific history of the question of word and deed in mission.<sup>33</sup>

This thesis analyzes what I have read as most relevant to the research questions, and that is, of course, subjective and open to debate. *Tibetaneren* held an even greater wealth of material relevant to the thesis than I had expected. There is only room in this thesis to include a fraction of relevant and interesting articles and quotes; therefore, the presentation in this thesis is quite selective. If it dwells more on some contributors than others it is not because I feel they are better or more important, but because they best fit the purposes of this particular paper.

In addition to the role of the researcher, it is important to consider some of the limitations and possible factors that might bias the writers of *Tibetaneren*, or cause them to

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<sup>32</sup> Chapter 5 will expand on this idea.

<sup>33</sup> See section 2.3.

emphasize or avoid certain subjects.<sup>34</sup> Influences and biases are part of the common background of the mission community, and as such are relevant to the research.

*Tibetaneren* is, by intention and nature, an advertisement for the mission, and emphasizes positive and encouraging news and descriptions. Like the NMS materials that Gullestad researched,<sup>35</sup> *Tibetaneren* is meant to encourage readers to support the mission's work with prayer, volunteer involvement and money. Thus, the mission magazine isn't where one can read extremely detailed practical business plans, or members' most thorough descriptions of life and problems in Nepal. Nor is it where one can read in depth about personal tensions and conflicts within the mission, or specifics about difficult or disillusioning experiences with mission work.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, it is not simply a rose-colored picture of mission in Nepal that appeared in the last ten years of *Tibetaneren*.

Missionaries' policy-practice as reflected upon in *Tibetaneren* is also shaped by dialogue with the mission's administration. Their writing itself is influenced by some suggestions and writing assignments from the editor of the magazine.<sup>37</sup> For example, the editor might ask the missionaries to describe a success story, scenes from their daily life, or a meeting with poverty that had made an impression on them. It is not possible or necessary to this research to know what each missionary was asked to contribute. But it is important to keep in mind that their choice of subject and writing method was not necessarily a purely personal choice. They may have put more personal details, doubts and everyday struggles into their blogs and letters to family.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, contributions to the magazine have wide range of subjects and means of expression, and it is clear that the editors by no means ruled with an iron hand.

Other personal preferences certainly come into play in *Tibetaneren*. Contributors may write less personally and openly about challenges, confusion and conflicts in a public magazine to an audience of both friends and strangers than they would if writing only to

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<sup>34</sup> In this I have been inspired by the chapter "Conscience and Truthfulness" (8-36) in John Barbour's *The Conscience of the Autobiographer: Ethical and Religious Dimensions of Autobiography*. (Great Britain, Biddles Ltd., 1992.)

<sup>35</sup> Gullestad, *Pity*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> "But at the same time one has to keep in mind that this is literature that is edited and adapted to an audience of mission friends. There is therefore a question of whether the literature tells the whole and full story..." "Men samtidig må man ha klart for seg at dette er litteratur som er redigert og tilpasset et publikum av misjonsvenner. Det blir dermed et spørsmål om litteraturen forteller den hele og fulle historien .." Mikaelsson, "Fortellinger", 284.

<sup>37</sup> Conversation with Mollestad, 24 January, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Conversation with Mollestad, 24 January, 2011.



close friends and family. Some articles were on topics of interest to friends of the mission and missionaries, but didn't have any direct connection to theology. One important factor to consider in the context is that people feel varying degrees of comfort with using religious language. It may be important to some individuals' identity to avoid sounding too pious, or too proud. This, in turn, can influence the balance expressed in the text between evangelism and social involvement.

There are also certain contextual limitations that have a profound effect on HimalPartner members' thinking and writing. The historical background in Chapter 3 will describe the situation of religious rights in Nepal and limitations for Christian missions working there. The research chapter will include more examples of what is left unsaid in *Tibetaneren*, and the analysis will reflect on the implications of certain biases and their relationship to the mission's context.

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the research question: to explore understandings of mission in word and deed in the Norwegian mission HimalPartner's magazine, *Tibetaneren*, and their place and relevance in a wider theological context. Within the discipline of mission theology, I have used theological and ethnographic methods to do a text analysis of *Tibetaneren*. The thesis approaches the mission magazine from the perspective of a community discourse.

I conducted the research by reading and analyzing the articles in *Tibetaneren* from 2000-2010 in relation to their theology of word and deed. This chapter has presented some of the biases and influences on the researcher and on contributors to *Tibetaneren*. The next two chapters present relevant background from the international and specific context of the discussion of word and deed in mission in *Tibetaneren*.

## 2. WORD AND DEED IN MISSION: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

### 2.1 Introduction

HimalPartner's mission statement call "to bring the gospel through word and deed," relates to an issue at the center of major Christian theological debates worldwide. South African mission theologian David Bosch called the relationship between evangelism and social involvement, "one of the thorniest areas in the theology and practice of mission."<sup>39</sup> The debate is, as will be clear in the contexts presented in this chapter, only partly a question of word and deed in mission. Most Christians would agree that witnessing about Jesus must almost inevitably involve both words and actions. The controversy surrounding the issue comes not so much from that, but from a potential or perceived conflict between serving the poor and telling the Gospel story, between evangelism and social involvement.

The theological emphases of mission organizations and churches when it comes to this question span the full spectrum. Some organizations focus almost solely on proclaiming the gospel in words, while others at the opposite extreme do good works and say almost nothing about their faith. But why is the question so difficult, and where does it come from?

This chapter will first describe the question of word and deed in mission in the context of a basic theology of mission. It will then describe the contemporary global context of the debate through the example of an international evangelical Protestant movement, the Lausanne movement. Finally, it will present some theoretical perspectives on word and deed in mission from the Lausanne movement that will serve both as a basis for comparison and contrast for the research.

### 2.2 Where does the question of word and deed in mission come from?

The question of word and deed in mission is related on the deepest level to motivations and understandings of mission based on Christian Scripture. The Biblical basis for Christian mission practice and the history of is much too vast, rich and controversial to summarize here, but several points are important background to the research and analysis of *Tibetaneren*.

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<sup>39</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 401.

First, some very basic Biblical background on the motivations for Christian mission. One can see the whole Bible as the story of God's love for the world He created and His "mission" to save it.<sup>40</sup> In this understanding, mission springs from the Christian worldview as a whole,<sup>41</sup> in which God "so loved the world that he gave his only Son [Jesus], so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). There are also many individual passages in the Bible that encourage and/or command Christians to share the gospel of Jesus and make disciples.<sup>42</sup> The most famous is the "Great Commission" in the gospels of Luke, Mark and Matthew<sup>43</sup> where Jesus, after his resurrection, tells his followers to "go out and make disciples of all nations."<sup>44</sup>

Second, one perspective on mission, the *missio dei* perspective, has had renewed emphasis by Christians worldwide in the past 50 years<sup>45</sup> and will be especially important in the description and analysis of HimalPartner's community theology. Mission in the *missio dei*--mission of God--understanding is not something that humans lead or create, but an act of God throughout history that humans can participate in.<sup>46</sup> While the both perspectives have to do with the motivations for Christian mission, the second has major implications also for how Christians interpret the practice and results of mission.

From either of these understandings of the motivations of mission, a question arises: How does one put ones faith and Biblical understandings into practice? What does it mean to be--and to make--a disciple of Jesus, or to witness to the Gospel story? How can we live out Jesus' "Great Commandment" to love God with all our hearts, souls and minds, and our neighbors as ourselves?<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the history of Christianity, people have interpreted Jesus' commission and commandment in many different ways, and have had some intense disagreements about their

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<sup>40</sup>Mosvold, *Misjonærkallet*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> "Mission flows, then, not just from one or two "missionary texts," but from the total Christian worldview that is built upon the Bible's own grand narrative." Christopher J. H. Wright, "Bible" in *the Encyclopedia of Missions and Missionaries*, (Ed. J. Bonk, New York: Routledge, 2007,) 43.

<sup>42</sup> Wright, "Bible," 43.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." See also Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:4-8.

<sup>44</sup>See Chapter 4. HimalPartner members bring up several individual Bible passages in *Tibetaneren* as important to their understanding of mission.

<sup>45</sup> Mosvold, *Misjonærkallet*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> As in Acts 2:47, "...And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

<sup>47</sup> Matthew 22:36-40

interpretations and practice. The question of the relationship between word and deed in the mission of the church has been discussed for thousands of years<sup>48</sup>, especially in specific, historical situations when Christians felt a potential conflict of time, priority or emphasis between verbal proclamation of the gospel and social service to the poor, sick and widows.<sup>49</sup>

There have also been many debates about what kind of words one should use to describe mission, as words themselves have importance for how one portrays and understands mission. The theological relationship between word and deed in mission can also be described in many other ways, each of which has different connotations. For "word", one also use "evangelism," which can have strong connotations of traditional verbal telling of the gospel story, or the word "witness", which potentially has more holistic connotations. There are even more words used to describe "deed"--service, social responsibility, social involvement, social action, diakonia or even development work or charity--all of which have different political connotations, and varying degrees of religious connotation. In choosing to use certain words, one inevitably favors a certain understanding of the question. This thesis will use the terms "word and deed" and "evangelism and social service" interchangeably as well as various words for "deed," despite the fact that they have slightly different theological connotations. However, I have attempted to translate wording from *Tibetaneren* so that the English has as much as possible the same connotations as the original Norwegian.

### **2.3 The Discussion in a Global Context: Word and Deed in the Lausanne Movement**

A number of important public theological debates among Christians worldwide during the past 50 years about the nature of mission provide a recent example of how intensely controversial the issue of words and deeds in mission can be. These debates are an important part of the historical context HimalPartner's own theological discussions. This section describes the history of the Lausanne movement and developments in its discussion about the role of evangelism and social action in mission, and through it also sketches some of the major perspectives on the question of word and deed in mission.

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<sup>48</sup> In the book of Acts in the Bible, Jesus' disciples appointed certain people among them to administrate organized care of the poor so that others could have more time to pray and "serve the word." Acts 6:1-7.

<sup>49</sup> See Bong Rin Ro, "The Perspectives of Church History from New Testament Time to 1960," in *A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Perspectives in In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (ed. Bruce Nicholls; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 11-37.

Is there a direct connection between HimalPartner and Lausanne? HimalPartner is a member of the Norwegian mission umbrella organization NORME, which is a member of the Lausanne movement. While the Lausanne movement has undoubtedly had some influence on the theology of members of HimalPartner, the specifics are not relevant to the research. Instead, Lausanne can function as a larger, global context for the theological discussions within HimalPartner, and as a model for comparison and contrast.

The Lausanne movement, an international mission-focused gathering of evangelical Christians, developed in response to debates within another Christian organization, The World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC was formed in 1948<sup>50</sup> to promote understanding and unity between the world's Christian churches. They held large meetings that gathered church leaders from around the world to discuss Christian theology, practice, and ecumenical understanding. In the late 1960's and early 1970's there was considerable focus within the WCC about Christian social justice and response to global inequality, led by church leaders from the global South.<sup>51</sup> Some delegates rejoiced at the strong emphasis on the poor. Others, however, felt that there was too much emphasis on a political vision of salvation, and not enough mention of Jesus. Tensions were heightened by the ongoing Cold War and Western fears of Marxist influences. What might sound like a harmless intellectual debate had, in that context, far-reaching and even--some felt--dangerous implications.<sup>52</sup>

In response to these developments in the WCC, another international mission movement gathered for a conference in Lausanne, Switzerland in the early 1970's. The delegates, many of whom continued to be involved in the WCC,<sup>53</sup> considered themselves "evangelical" Christians<sup>54</sup> --meaning they wanted to emphasize the centrality of Christ, the Bible and evangelism in a more traditional sense.<sup>55</sup> The Lausanne movements' series of

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<sup>50</sup> Tormod Engelsen, "Misjonstenkningen fra 1900 til vår tid/ Mission thinking from 1900 to our time," in *Missiologi i Dag/ Missiology Today*, (Ed. J. M. Berentsen et al., 2nd Ed., Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 2004,) 141.

<sup>51</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 435.

<sup>52</sup> Engelsen, "Misjonstenkningen," 150.

<sup>53</sup> Engelsen, "Misjonstenkningen," 152.

<sup>54</sup> The former leader of the World Council of Churches, Bishop Lilje, gave a concise description of evangelical theology: "The essential common mark [of the evangelical] is the determination to abide by the testimony of the Biblical Christ." While the term "evangelical" is not common in Norway and HimalPartner members do not use the term to describe themselves in *Tibetaneren*, the core theology of the mission community has many similarities to that of the evangelical movement. Cited in Klaus Bockmuehl, *Evangelicals and Social Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979,) 43.

<sup>55</sup> Engelsen, "Misjonstenkningen," 151; Klaus Bockmuehl, *Evangelicals*, 43.

conferences from the 1970's onward included evangelical Christian leaders with a broad spectrum of beliefs and opinions.

There was particularly intense debate at the first Lausanne conference about how the movement should view words and deeds in mission.<sup>56</sup> Many delegates wanted to clearly prioritize evangelism in mission, sharing the gospel in words, and reaching the "unreached" with the Good News.<sup>57</sup> Other delegates insisted that social responsibility was a vital part of mission and constantly practiced by Jesus and His disciples, who healed and gave as well as taught.<sup>58</sup> Some were so dissatisfied by the final Lausanne document that they wrote a "radical" response that emphasized the inseparability of word and deed.<sup>59</sup> The concerns continued to surface in other Lausanne movement events.<sup>60</sup>

Norwegian mission historian Tormod Engelsen points out that Lausanne I went so far as to divide evangelism and social responsibility, but to divide the social dimension into "social service" and "social action", clearly attempting to separate action aimed at changing unjust social structures--with its clear and provocative political dimension--from the less-threatening and not-so-controversial "social service" of aid and charity work.<sup>61</sup> The discussion at Lausanne was in many ways strongly influenced by a specifically American theological disagreement about the role of words and deeds in Christian life. 19th century social and religious movements contributed to the creation of a deep division in American Christian culture that continues to this day--dramatic historical division between Christians emphasizing a Social Gospel with little connection to the Christian gospel, and Christians emphasizing a Biblical gospel of personal salvation with little emphasis on social involvement.<sup>62</sup> While, as argued above, the issue of the nature and practice of mission is one

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<sup>56</sup> Klaus Bockmuehl, *Evangelicals*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Engelsen, "Misjonstenkningen," 151.

<sup>58</sup> Three major speakers at the conference focused on social issues, two of whom, Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar, were influential South American liberation theologians. Klaus Bockmuehl, *Evangelicals*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> "Theology Implications of Radical Discipleship," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, (ed. J. D. Douglas; Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 1294.

<sup>60</sup> David Bosch, "In Search of a New Evangelical Understanding" in *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (ed. Bruce Nicholls; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 79.

<sup>61</sup> Engelsen, "Misjonstenkningen," 157.

<sup>62</sup> In the 19th century United States, a strongly secular "social gospel" movement developed which made a kind of religion out of social progress and suggested that the gospel of Jesus wasn't really necessary if we could only perfect our social structures--we could, in a sense, save ourselves and bring about a utopian Kingdom on earth. Many American Christians reacted with a "fundamentalist" Christian theology that emphasized the importance of Biblical faith in Christ and individual salvation, and deemphasized social involvement--almost to the same extreme that the others had emphasized it. See Bosch, *Search*, 70 and *Transforming Mission*, 403.

that all Christians struggle with worldwide, the American historical religious and political divisions gave artificial importance to a sharp division between social involvement and evangelism in Lausanne theology.

In 1985, the Lausanne movement held a conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which focused entirely on the question of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility in Christian mission. While the final Grand Rapids document still gave evangelism in words a clear priority, movement delegates were able to agree that both were important and inseparable parts of mission.<sup>63</sup>

In later years, the WCC and Lausanne have moved closer to each other's view of mission. In Fall 2010, the Lausanne movement held a long-awaited major conference in Cape Town, South Africa. The resulting document, the *Cape Town Commitment*, strongly emphasizes love--our love for God and his love for us--in action. It expresses a call to "integral mission, which is the proclamation *and* demonstration of the gospel."<sup>64</sup> The *Cape Town Commitment* advocates a Christian response to many specific social injustices and concerns. Rather than dividing the document up into separate sections about word and deed, as the first Lausanne covenant did, the *Commitment* frequently mentions verbal and active forms of mission in the same sections.<sup>65</sup> The global evangelical movement that many saw 'towards the whole gospel'--towards a theology of mission that integrates words and deeds--at the end of the last millennium seems to be continuing.

#### 2.4 Theoretical Categories from Grand Rapids

While the Cape Town Commitment could provide a fresh contemporary context for the thesis, it is not the best organized or argued of the Lausanne documents. A series of lectures given at Lausanne's Grand Rapids conference in 1985,<sup>66</sup> which dealt specifically with the relationship of word and deed in mission, have helped inspire the research model of this thesis and provide stronger structures for the later analysis, in which articles in *Tibetaneren* both illustrate and challenge the Grand Rapids perspectives on mission.

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<sup>63</sup> Engelsviken, "Misjonstenkingen," 157.

<sup>64</sup> The Lausanne Movement, *Cape Town Commitment*, 1. Available from <[www.lausanne.org/ctcommitment](http://www.lausanne.org/ctcommitment)> Internet, accessed April 2, 2011.

<sup>65</sup> For example, the subheading "We love the transformation the Gospel produces" under the heading, "We love the Gospel of God," *Cape Town Commitment*, 18.

<sup>66</sup> These papers are collected and edited by Bruce J. Nicholls in the book *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

In his paper for the Grand Rapids Conference, African evangelical leader Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo<sup>67</sup> created 9 different potential categories for seeing the relationship between social action and evangelism. In another paper presented at the Lausanne Grand Rapids Conference, South African theologian David Bosch criticized, categorized, and simplified Adeyemo's categories. Between the two of them, they present a number of interesting and useful evangelical Christian perspectives on the relationship of evangelism and social action.

The following are Adeyemos' nine categories of evangelical perspectives on word and deed:<sup>68</sup>

- A. Social action is a distraction from evangelism
- B. Social action is a betrayal of evangelism
- C. Social Action is (indistinguishable from) evangelism.
- D. Social Action is a means/bridge/preparation to evangelism
- E. Social action is a manifestation of evangelism
- F. Social Action is a result or consequence of evangelism
- G. Social action is a partner of evangelism
- H. Social action and evangelism are equally important but genuinely distinct aspects of the total mission of the church.
- I. Social action is part of the good news and of evangelism

In a note in Nicholl's edited collection of the papers, David Bosch adds two more categories that "evangelicals would reject" because they give priority to social action or a this-worldly understanding of salvation, but that may have relevance for certain perspectives in *Tibetaneren*.<sup>69</sup>

- C.2 Social action is more important than evangelism
- C.3 Evangelism is politics because salvation is social justice.

Adeyemo immediately rejects the first three options, which emphasize either social action or evangelism to the exclusion of the others. He concludes by consolidating the remaining viable options into two basic categories: 1. "That social action is distinct from, yet equal to evangelism" 2. "That social action is a part of/or is a partner of/or is a consequence of/or

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<sup>67</sup> Dr. Adeyemo was General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM). Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, "A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Perspectives" in *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (ed. Bruce Nicholls; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 41.

<sup>68</sup> Adeyemo, "Critical Evaluation," 48-57.

<sup>69</sup> Bosch, "Search," 51.



proceeds from evangelism."<sup>70</sup> He sees F, G, H and I as so similar as to be virtually indistinguishable.

Adeyemo and the others in the Grand Rapids conference can be seen as working towards a basically holistic understanding of Christian mission in which both word and deed are extremely important. However, Adeyemo is very critical of the holistic view of mission presented in option C. He believes that without making a clear division between evangelism and social involvement, a fundamentally Biblical characteristic of mission will be lost, and mission will be indistinguishable from "any other humanitarian charity organization."<sup>71</sup> He defines social action only in relationship to evangelism. In demanding that a distinction be made and that evangelism come first, Adeyemo is consistent with the evangelical side of the 'American split.'

In a response to Adeyemo's paper, also presented at the Grand Rapids conference, David Bosch<sup>72</sup> criticizes all of Adeyemo's perspectives as unhealthily dualistic, in that they make evangelism and social responsibility into rivals.<sup>73</sup> He connects the dualism between evangelism and social action to a greater theological division in which "grace remains opposed to nature, justification to justice, the soul to the body, the individual to society, redemption to creation, heaven to earth, the world to the deed, and evangelism to social responsibility."<sup>74</sup>

Instead of perspectives which overemphasize evangelism alone or service alone, Bosch suggests a model in which evangelism is understood holistically as the "inviting and ingathering dimension of the total mission" in which evangelizing Christians are sent out to social service. He also describes a model of "*creative tension* between the evangelistic and serving dimensions of the Church's involvement."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Adeyemo, "Critical Evaluation," 57.

<sup>71</sup> Adeyemo, "Critical Evaluation," 50.

<sup>72</sup> David Bosch (1929-1992), a South African mission theologian, was himself committed to a view of mission in which social action was integral, writing that, "evangelism cannot be divorced from the preaching and practicing of justice," (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 416.) In his writing Bosch creates bridges between the liberation theology he was strongly influenced by and conservative evangelical theologians who tended to be suspicious of liberation theology.

<sup>73</sup> Bosch, "Search," 76.

<sup>74</sup> Bosch, "Search," 82.

<sup>75</sup> Bosch, "Search," 82.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

There is worldwide debate about the role of words and deeds in mission. Throughout history Christians have different understandings of their place in the mission of God and responses to the Great Commission. In recent times, Christians in the World Council of Churches and the Lausanne movement have debated the role of evangelism and social involvement in mission. While the Lausanne movement tended to emphasize verbal evangelism in reaction to ecumenical Christian movements that emphasized a secular, social-action-focused interpretation of the gospel, it has in recent years become more open to describing the importance of social involvement in Christian life.

In their papers for Lausanne's Grand Rapids Conference, Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo and David Bosch present examples of different evangelical perspectives that, combined with their reactions to other theologies of mission, give a broad spectrum of ideas on the relationship of word and deed in Christian mission. These international perspectives will be useful tools for comparison and contrast in the analysis of HimalPartner's community theology.<sup>76</sup>

## **3. HIMALPARTNER'S SPECIFIC CONTEXT: NORWAY AND NEPAL**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The Lausanne discussion and the specific perspectives of Dr. Adeyemo and David Bosch address the question of words and deed in mission in the abstract, from a universal, theoretical Christian theological perspective with little or no connection to specific situations or contexts. The specific context of HimalPartner in Norway and Nepal, on the other hand, is extremely important to understanding the mission's community expressions of mission theology, and how they differ from those of the Lausanne movement. This chapter will explore the specific context of HimalPartner that has shaped--and forms a common background for--HimalPartner's diverse community theology of word and deed. It will briefly describe the spiritual heritage of Norwegian mission societies, and then the context of mission and church growth in Nepal as it relates to HimalPartner's view of word and deed in mission.

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<sup>76</sup> See Chapter 5.

### 3.2 HimalPartner's Official Theology and Internal Diversity

HimalPartner has agreed on some official theology as a mission organization. The two publically available official theological documents of the mission are the *Grunnregler*-- "Ground Rules," and "Strategy for 2010-2014". These are useful basic background for understanding the mission's work and theology. In the ground rules, the first paragraph is a mission statement: HimalPartner has as its purpose through word and deed to bring the gospel to Tibetan, Nepali and other peoples in the countries of the Himalayas.<sup>77</sup> The second paragraph in the ground rules of the mission states that the mission's foundation is the Holy Scriptures and the evangelical Lutheran confession [of the Church of Norway].<sup>78</sup> Thirdly, it says that the mission's "most important task is to send out people with a call to service" who "both abroad and at home will carry out their service in compliance with the mission's purpose and confession."<sup>79</sup> In every issue of *Tibetaneren*, there is a small banner that describes the mission's purpose and the three first ground rules. It also includes the fact that they work through Nepal Christian umbrella organizations UMN and INF, and the types of work that HimalPartner missionaries are involved in.<sup>80</sup>

The 2010-2014 strategy booklet includes Francis of Assisi's prayer "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace," a brief history and description of HimalPartner, and then a description of the mission's strategy in two pages of text and a list of key words. The strategy cites HimalPartner's mission statement from the ground rules,<sup>81</sup> and introduces HimalPartner's strategy in this way:<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> "HimalPartner har til formål gjennom ord og tjeneste å bringe evangeliet til tibetanere, nepalere og andre folk i landene rundt Himalaya." The ground rules were approved by the HimalPartner's General Assembly in 1946, and edited most recently in 2008. HimalPartner's "Grunnregler/ Ground Rules" available from [http://www.himalpartner.no/images/stories/Om\\_himalpartner\\_/Formelle\\_dokumenter/HimalPartner.Grunnregler.pdf](http://www.himalpartner.no/images/stories/Om_himalpartner_/Formelle_dokumenter/HimalPartner.Grunnregler.pdf), Accessed 4 May, 2011.

<sup>78</sup> See the Church of Norway's website, "Om Troen/About Faith," available from <http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=2171>, accessed 18 May, 2011.

<sup>79</sup> "Misjonens viktigste oppgave er å sende ut mennesker med et kall til tjeneste. Utsendingene både ute og hjemme skal utfører sin tjeneste i samsvar med misjonens formål og bekjennelse." HimalPartner, Ground Rules.

<sup>80</sup> "...Utsendingene våre er engasjert i administrasjon, helsearbeid, undervisning, jordbruk, kraftutbygging samt distrikts- og industriutvikling." "Our missionaries are involved in administration, health work, teaching, agriculture, hydropower and district and industrial development." From "Om oss/ about us" *Tibetaneren* 2009.1, 18.

<sup>81</sup> HimalPartner, "Strategi 2010-2014," 5.

<sup>82</sup> "HimalPartner (tidl. Tibetmisjon) er en liten og nyskapende organisasjon. Vi arbeider for å gi mennesker muligheten til å bedre sine levekår. Vi ønsker at flest mulig skal lære å kjenne Herrens kjærlighet og frelse og bli satt i stand til å bringe den videre. HimalPartner ser bruken av kristent

HimalPartner (formerly Tibetmisjon) is a small and groundbreaking organization. We are working to give people the opportunity to better their living conditions. We want as many people as possible to know the Lord's love and salvation and be made capable of sharing that with others. HimalPartner sees the use of Christian personnel in development work as a good way to do mission. For HimalPartner, mission means more than words. Mission also means furthering God's kingdom through practical and neighbor-loving actions.

With reference to the mission statement, the strategy plan goes on to say that the mission has "two equal callings: one to contribute to the growth of God's kingdom, the other to contribute to a purposeful and sustainable development in the countries in the Himalaya region. These are dependent on each other and mutually inclusive."<sup>83</sup>

There is one Norwegian term unique to HimalPartner and often used in the mission's advertising and descriptions in news media --"yrkesmisjon," which loosely translated means "working mission." HimalPartner uses this designation to their method of mission in which professionals are sent out to share the gospel through "secular" vocations such as medicine or engineering. While this idea has clear similarities to the idea of tentmaking mission,<sup>84</sup> HimalPartner is not a true tentmaking organization, because missionaries receive salaries from HimalPartner rather than being self-supporting professionals.<sup>85</sup>

As one can see from the above, there is relatively little formal information about the mission's theology available publically. In some senses, then, *Tibetaneren* represents at the moment the most thorough *public* document that presents HimalPartner's theology, important for communicating and shaping the broader mission communities understanding of mission in word and deed.

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personell i utviklingsarbeid som en god måte å drive misjon på. For HimalPartner betyr misjon mer enn ord. Misjon er også å fremme Guds rike gjennom praktisk og nestekjærlig handling." HimalPartner, "Strategi 2010-2014," 6.

<sup>83</sup> "Vi har to likeverdige kallslinjer: den ene å bidra til Guds rikes vekst, den andre å bidra til en hensiktsmessig og bærekraftig utvikling i landene i Himalaya-området. Disse er avhengige av hverandre og er gjensidig inkluderende." HimalPartner, "Strategi 2010-2014," 6.

<sup>84</sup> The term "tentmaker" missionary references the apostle Paul, who supported himself as a maker of tents while he travelled around Asia Minor (Acts 18:3). Today, it is often used to describe Christians who work abroad in secular jobs, which provide both their income and opportunities to form relationships and witness to the Gospel. This form of mission has become increasingly popular, especially in countries where traditional mission is forbidden, and was specifically encouraged in the *Cape Town Commitment* (Cape Town, 24).

<sup>85</sup> "Tanker om Misjon: Unikt, Unådd og Utfordrende/ Thoughts about Mission: Unique, Unreached and Challenging," 2003.3, 3; Andreas Kolaas, "Tanker om Misjon: Teltmakeren/ Thoughts about Mission: The Tentmaker," 2003.1, 3.

Within HimalPartner there has always been a wide spectrum of thought about the nature of mission, and, in particular, the nature of working mission. *Tibetaneren* provides a window into the diversity and discussions that were taking place within the mission's understanding and practice of Christian theology. The two general secretaries of HimalPartner during the period of the research, Grethe Raddum (2000-2009) and Heidi Westborg Steel (2009-present),<sup>86</sup> wrote some interesting and helpful ideas about HimalPartner's theological identity in relationship to practice and the community. Both speak in interviews printed in *Tibetaneren* about theological tensions and disagreements in the mission with regards to an understanding of word and deed.<sup>87</sup> Grethe emphasizes that the mission's theology has been a "gift" from God through the limitations and needs of its particular context, and that the diversity of theological views are a strength rather than a difficulty.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.3 Roots of Norwegian Mission Theology

The following are some historical roots of Norwegian mission theology that can be helpful in understanding the theology and practice of HimalPartner. Norway has a long missionary tradition, and the theological themes of word and deed and holistic mission focused on in this thesis are not a new or isolated trend. While the same split between emphasis on word and deed described in Chapter 2 in American history is to some extent also present in Norwegian Christian culture,<sup>89</sup> various ways of emphasizing social involvement as an important part of Christian life and mission have a long--if by no means uncontroversial--historical precedent in Norway.

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<sup>86</sup> "I see also that HimalPartner is a diverse organization within which there could be much potential for conflict. Despite this people work side by side, despite big differences in expression and understanding of their faith. In such diversity there is incredible amounts of strength..." "Jeg ser også at Tibetmisjon er en mangfoldig organisasjon, hvor det i utgangspunktet kunne være mange konfliktlinjer. Likevel arbeider folk side ved side, tross store forskjeller i uttrykk og trosoppfatninger. I et slikt mangfoldet ligger det utrolig mye kraft..." Bjørn Lyngroth, interview with Heidi Westborg Steel, "Noen Endringer--men ikke for fort /Some changes--but not too fast," *Tibetaneren*, 2009.5, 8.

<sup>87</sup> Bjørn Lyngroth, "Helhetlig Misjon/Holistic Mission," *Tibetaneren*, 2007.4, 10; and interview with Heidi Westborg Steel, "Noen Endringer--men ikke for fort/Some changes--but not too fast," *Tibetaneren*, 2009.5, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Grethe Raddum quoted in Bjørn Lyngroth's "Helhetlig misjon/ Holistic Mission", *Tibetaneren*, 2007.4, 10.

<sup>89</sup> For example, missionaries Tullis and Odd Hoftun worried about how a conservative Christian audience in Norway would respond to their stories about industrial development as a form of mission in Nepal. Bjørn Lyngroth, "En Kraftig Historie/ A Powerful Story [Interview with Odd and Tullis Hoftun]," *Tibetaneren*, 2008.2, 12-13.

These roots are strong in Norway and certainly influence members' understanding of mission in word and deed. Because they are underlying assumptions, this background is often referenced rather than explained fully in the magazine.

### 3.3.1 Church of Norway

Medieval Norwegian Christians belonged to a Catholic state church intertwined with the Dano-Norwegian monarchy. As in other parts of Europe, there was a strong tradition in medieval Norway of Christian organizations and churches caring for the sick and needy as part of their ministry.<sup>90</sup> Churches and monasteries were often places to be healed and fed in body as well as in soul. From the end of the 14th until the early 19th century, Norway was ruled by Denmark. When Denmark's king Christian III was crowned in 1536, he declared Denmark a Lutheran country--automatically making Norway's state church Lutheran as well.<sup>91</sup> Traces of Norway's Catholic heritage remain.

Norway is still a Lutheran country, with an official state church. As such, reformation theology has a strong influence in Norwegian culture. While Martin Luther wrote of the importance of Christians caring for one another's needs as a community, he emphasized the belief that deeds cannot save us, only the grace of Christ.<sup>92</sup> A typical Lutheran theology sees good deeds as a response to God's salvation, and in this way central to Christian life.

Many, but not all members of HimalPartner are members of the Church of Norway. The perspectives from *Tibetaneren* will not make sense without taking into account many authors' foundational belief in the Biblical gospel of salvation through Jesus.

### 3.3.2 Hans Nielsen Hauge

Another important influence on Norwegian Christian's view of word, deed and mission came from a revival at the beginning of the 19th century had an enormous impact on Christian life in Norway. In 1830, Norwegian farmer's son Hans Nielsen Hauge had an experience of God's love that led him to travel the country as a lay evangelist.<sup>93</sup> Wherever he went, he

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<sup>90</sup> Øivind Foss, *Kirkens Diakoni i bibelteologisk, historisk og etisk belysning/ The diakonia of the church in the light of Biblical theology, history and ethics*, (Århus, Denmark: Århus University Press, 1992,) 63,87.

<sup>91</sup> Foss, *Kirkens Diakoni*, 89.

<sup>92</sup> Foss, *Kirkens Diakoni*, 72-73; Church of Norway, "Om Troen/About Faith," available from <<http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=2171>>, accessed 18 May, 2011.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Shaw, *Pulpit Under the Sky: A Life of Hans Nielsen Hauge*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1955,) 23, 26.

shared the gospel of repentance and forgiveness in Christ, and at the same time helped spark social transformation by encouraging converts to start businesses and new lives.<sup>94</sup> For Hauge, spiritual and social transformation were inseparable. Sharing the gospel in this integral way was, as he put it, “like a fire within me, so that I couldn't be silent.”<sup>95</sup>

Hauge spent many years in jail under a Norwegian law forbidding lay ministry and unauthorized Christian gatherings outside the state church. This law was repealed soon after Hauge's death, opening the way for foreign mission societies to develop that were strongly evangelical, socially involved lay movements independent of the state church.<sup>96</sup> Hauge's friends and followers were among the strong supporters of the new foreign mission societies that emerged during the 1840s and 50s.<sup>97</sup> Other important influences on early Norwegian mission societies came from the Moravian Brethren and from the Wesleyan revival in England,<sup>98</sup> both of which emphasized the centrality of Jesus, evangelism and brotherly love expressed through social involvement.<sup>99</sup>

There are stories that Norwegians hearing about HimalPartner's work for the first time have accepted the concept of "working mission" as a legitimate practice by comparing it to Hauge's ministry.<sup>100</sup> In addition to his historical influence on Norwegian theology, Hauge's example of serving the Lord and witnessing through his particular life and gifts has been an important direct source of inspiration for a number of people in HimalPartner.<sup>101</sup> The mission has had renewed interest in its Haugian heritage in the past five years, and the theme for HimalPartner's summer mission conference in 2011 will be Hauge's model of Christian entrepreneurship and evangelism.

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<sup>94</sup> Sverre Norborg, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, (Oslo, Norway: J.W. Cappelens Forlag,) 56.

<sup>95</sup> "Det var som en ild i meg at jeg ikke kunne tie." Alv Johan Magnus, *Veirydder med gnagsår*, Ottestad, Norway: Prokla-Media, 88.

<sup>96</sup> Andreas Aarflot, *Norsk Kirkehistorie, Vol 2*. (Oslo, Norway: Reistad og Sønn, 1967,) 253.

<sup>97</sup> Erling Danbolt, *Misjonstankens Gjennombrudd i Norge/ The Breakthrough of the Mission Concept in Norway*, (Oslo, Norway: Egede Instituttet, 1947,) 268-269.

<sup>98</sup> Gullestad, *Pity*, 36; Torstein Jørgensen, *De Første Hundre År: Det Norske Misjonselskaps Historie / The First Hundred Years: The History of the Norwegian Mission Society Vol 1*, (Misjonshøgskolen: Stavanger, Norway, 1992,) 17.

<sup>99</sup> Øivind Foss discusses the social involvement and mission activity of the Moravian Brethren in detail. Foss, *Kirkens Diakoni*, 98-105.

<sup>100</sup> Lyngroth "En Kraftig Historie/ A Powerful Story [Interview with Odd and Tullis Hoftun]," *Tibetaneren*, 2008.2

<sup>101</sup> See 4.2.3.

### 3.3.3 *Diakonia*

Another important influence on Norwegian mission theology and practice is the Pietist movement and its tradition of *diakonia*, a term that in Norway has come to mean "the caring ministry of the church."<sup>102</sup> The Pietist movement in Northern Europe in the 1900s emphasized revival, church reform, and inner transformation through a "personal relationship to Christ as Savior and Lord."<sup>103</sup> The original Pietist movement had a strong focus on social involvement,<sup>104</sup> and was the source of the diaconal movement, which started in Germany and spread to Scandinavia. While there has been an institutional understanding of *diakonia* in which people studied and trained to become as *diakonisser*, nurses who dedicated their lives to Christian service, caring for the sick, needy, and homeless.<sup>105</sup> But Norwegian state churches<sup>106</sup> and the churches of the Lutheran World Federation<sup>107</sup> have also integrated *diakonia* into their understanding of the nature of the church, as part of the churches' "witness to Gods love and will."<sup>108</sup> The use of the term *diakonia* to describe the social involvement of the Christian church, while still most concentrated in Northern Europe, is growing worldwide.

The Pietist movement was, according to Kristi Mosvold, an important source of influence and inspiration for the Norwegian foreign mission movement,<sup>109</sup> and the concept of *diakonia* has historically been a strong part of Norwegian mission history abroad.<sup>110</sup> While most early Norwegian missionaries were trained as pastors, many worked in addition as nurses and teachers and in other ways responded to the needs they met in the countries they worked in.<sup>111</sup> This led to discussions within Norwegian mission societies about the balance or relationship between evangelism and social involvement.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment*, (ed. K. Nordstokke, Geneva, Switzerland: LWF, 2009,) 27; see also Sigrun Møgedal og Anne Skjelmerud, "Misjon og Diakoni/ Mission and Diakonia," in *Missiologi i Dag* (ed. J.M. Berentsen, T. Engelsviken and K. Jørgensen. 2nd Edition. Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 2004,) 327.

<sup>103</sup> "Personlig kjennskap til Jesus som Herre og frelser..." Mosvold, *Misjonærkallet*, 7.

<sup>104</sup> Foss, *Kirkens Diakoni*, 95 and following chapter on Pietist *diakonia*.

<sup>105</sup> Foss, *Kirkens Diakoni*, 107.

<sup>106</sup> Møgedal og Skjelmerud, "Misjon og Diakoni," 327.

<sup>107</sup> LWF, *Diakonia in Context*, 27-30.

<sup>108</sup> Møgedal og Skjelmerud, "Misjon og Diakoni," 327.

<sup>109</sup> Mosvold, *Misjonærkallet*, 7.

<sup>110</sup> Møgedal og Skjelmerud, "Misjon og Diakoni," 328; Jarle Simensen, *Norsk Utviklingshjelps Historie/ Norwegian Development Aid History, Vol 1* (Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget, 2003,) 30.

<sup>111</sup> Gullestad, *Pity*, 37.

<sup>112</sup> Gullestad, *Pity*, 37.



HimalPartner has a particularly strong connection to the Norwegian diaconal tradition. General secretary Grethe Raddum mentions several times the fact that the first missionaries sent out by HimalPartner (to Tibet and China in 1938) were professional "diakons", and connects this with the missions understanding of its task or mission.<sup>113</sup> Raddum and a number other members of HimalPartner have an educational background in diakonia.<sup>114</sup>

### 3.3.4 Solidarity and the Tradition of "Bistand"

Once one of the poorest countries in Europe, Norway has undergone an incredible "rags to riches" transformation, with the development of hydropower resources during the late 19th century<sup>115</sup> and later the development of the North Sea oil industry in the late 1970's. Norway now ranks first on the Human Development Index scale of "very highly developed countries" according to social and economic development.<sup>116</sup> This means that while many can remember harder times, all of the members of *Tibetaneren* now live in what Norwegians call an *overflodssamfunn*--literally an "overflowing society"--often reminded of the fact that they come from one of the richest and most privileged parts of an unjust world.

The ideal of solidarity is deeply ingrained in Norwegian society, as expressed in the social welfare system in which members share responsibility for the wellbeing of others. In his biography of HimalPartner pioneer missionary Odd Hoftun, Peter Svalheim describes Hoftun's Norwegian ideological background as a "rope with three strands," one of which was the ideal of solidarity.<sup>117</sup> While the idea of supporting ones fellow citizens is particularly strong within Norway, for many Norwegians it also has global implications and encompasses an ideal of solidarity with humanity.

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<sup>113</sup> Grethe Raddum, "Tro, virksom i kjærlighet gjennom 70 år/ Faith working in love through 70 years," *Tibetaneren*, 2008.1, 2; Bjørn Lyngroth "Helhetlig misjon/ Holistic Mission," *Tibetaneren*, 2007.4, 10.

<sup>114</sup> Bjørn Lyngroth, "Møtet med enkeltmennesker/ Meetings with Individuals," *Tibetaneren*, 2009.4, 16-17.

<sup>115</sup> Riksantikvariatet (Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage), "Kraftverkene/The Hydropower Plants," Available from <<http://www.riksantikvaren.no/?module=Articles;action=Article.publicShow;ID=3059>>, Accessed 18 May, 2011.

<sup>116</sup> United Nations Development Programme. "Human Development Index and its components". Available from <[http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2010\\_EN\\_Table1\\_reprint.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Table1_reprint.pdf)> Internet; accessed 11 May 2011.

<sup>117</sup> The other two influences are Hans Nielsen Hauge and the Danish philosopher and theologian N. F. S. Grundtvig. The passage cited is from Chapter 6 of a newly edited version of Svalheim's book, translated to English by the author of this thesis, to be published in Nepal in 2012. Original title *Kraftverket: Odd Hoftun--Portrett av et Livsverk/The Power Plant: Odd Hoftun--Portrait of a Life's Work*, (Oslo, Norway: Avenir, 2009.)

Since the 1950's, Norway has been strongly involved in aid and development work, or *bistand*.<sup>118</sup> Thus, modern development aid theories are another clear source of influence on Norwegian culture and the thinking of contributors to *Tibetaneren*.<sup>119</sup> As Norway has become more involved in officially funded development programs overseas, many Norwegian mission societies have gone through a long transition of theologically relating the social dimension of their work to the concept of development aid.<sup>120</sup> Because HimalPartner started work in Nepal in the 1950's, at the same time as development aid became important in the international arena, and began immediately as a "working mission," HimalPartner has not had to go through the same transition as many older mission societies.

But HimalPartner does have to relate to current tensions in Norwegian society with regards to evangelism and development aid funding. HimalPartner, like other Norwegian missions that receive government funding for development projects, is a member of *Bistandsnemda* (Norwegian Missions in Development--BN), a Norwegian umbrella organization that functions as a liaison between Christian mission societies and the Norwegian government. The Norwegian government has required mission societies to separate their development work from their evangelistic projects in order to receive funding;<sup>121</sup> a division that some Bistandsnemda members have argued is unnecessary and/or impossible.<sup>122</sup> While the implications of development aid funding restrictions on HimalPartner's practice are not directly stated in *Tibetaneren*, the controversy is an important piece of background for their reflections.

Lately, there has been a good deal of debate in the Norwegian media on the spiritual implications of aid and development work, and on a more holistic model of development that takes the importance of religion in world cultures seriously.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Simensen, *Norsk Utviklingshjelp*, 54-55.

<sup>119</sup> For example, Tore Skeie, "Kva ka vi yta/ What can we contribute?," *Tibetaneren*, 2010.1, 8-9.

<sup>120</sup> Gullestad writes about the Norwegian Mission Society going through this transition. Gullestad, *Picturing Pity*, 37.

<sup>121</sup> Gullestad, *Pity*, 37.

<sup>122</sup> Jørn Lemvik, General Secretary of Bistandsnemda. Lecture at Misjonshøgskolen for the class "Development and Diakonia", Stavanger, Norway, March 2010.

<sup>123</sup> Particularly noteworthy was when the Norwegian Minister of Development Erik Solheim publically stated in 2011 that all development organizations should consider the role of religion in their work, and that Norwegian missions had a long history of excellence at this. Fred C. Gjestad, "Solheim vil ha religion inn i utviklingsarbeid/ Solheim wants religion in development work," *Aftenposten*, 5 April 2011, available at <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/uriks/article4069809.ece>, Internet, accessed May 15, 2011.

### 3.3.5 Liberation Theology.

In the chapter on liberation theology in his influential work *Transforming Mission*, Bosch traces the beginnings of the liberation theology movement to the "dramatic discovery of the poor" by Roman Catholics, especially in Latin America, in the 1970's, seeking to create church not "for" the poor but "with and of the poor."<sup>124</sup> Liberation theology challenged, and to a large extent successfully,<sup>125</sup> the traditional Western theological practice of relegating the question of Christian response to poverty to the realm of ethics.<sup>126</sup>

While related to the development aid movement,<sup>127</sup> Liberation theology has not been a direct force in Norwegian churches. This is perhaps because most Norwegians have not seen radical social injustices or widespread poverty to address in their own society. However, Norwegian mission involvement in South Africa and Brazil points to the idea that Norwegians may potentially have had a connection to liberation theology through their solidarity with Christians in countries where liberation theology originated.<sup>128</sup>

### 3.3.6 Norwegian Missions Today

Lisbeth Mikaelsson points out that Norwegian missions have interpreted the Great Commandment as a congregation endeavor, a calling for the Christian community rather than only for specific individuals such as pastors and missionaries. In HimaPartner's mission theology, many express a belief that all Christians share the basic motivations and calling of missionaries--although different people are called to witness and serve in different ways, and some are called specifically to work abroad as missionaries.

While mission societies have long been strong in Norway, in the past 50 years, mission support in Norway has waned along with a steep decline in church attendance. While 81 percent of the Norwegian population held membership in the Church of Norway as of 2009,<sup>129</sup> the vast majority of members attend church only on important holidays and

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<sup>124</sup>Bosch, *Transforming*, 436, 437.

<sup>125</sup> Bosch goes on to say that evangelicals have "gradually begun to see the indissoluble connection between theology and social ethics." Bosch, *Transforming*, 437.

<sup>126</sup> Bosch, *Transforming*, 437.

<sup>127</sup> Bosch, *Transforming*, 433.

<sup>128</sup> Conversation over coffee with Ragnhild Halle in Kampen Church, Stavanger on May 1, 2011.

<sup>129</sup> Ulla Schmidt, "Norge: et religiøst pluralistisk samfunn? /Norway: A Pluralistic Religious Society?" in *Religion i dagens Norge*, (ed P. Botvar og U. Schmidt, Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 2010,) 26.

celebrations such as weddings and baptisms.<sup>130</sup> Lack of support within Norway is one of the biggest challenges Norwegian missions face today. HimalPartner, like all other mission organizations in Norway, currently has to relate not only to supporters but also to a public who are often suspicious or directly critical of Christian mission.<sup>131</sup> For this reason they may also in some senses be writing apologetics, responding to criticisms of Christian theology and mission.

### 3.4 Nepal Context

The specific context of Nepal has shaped the mission members' practice and their understanding both of their Christian faith and of their calling to serve and witness. As mentioned in Chapter 1, contributors have been in Nepal at different points and for varying periods of time. All share an interest in the context of Nepal, and a number of articles in *Tibetaneren* are devoted to presenting the history of Christianity in Nepal to readers. This section will describe the history of Christianity and mission in Nepal as it relates to HimalPartner's practice and understanding of word and deed in mission.

#### 3.4.1 Challenges in Nepal History Research

In 2000, there were an estimated 400,000 Nepali Christians<sup>132</sup> in the country's population of about 29 million.<sup>133</sup> This represents an astronomical growth since the 1950's, in which there were few or no Christians in Nepal. But as yet very little has been written about history of the Christian faith Nepal, either in Nepali or English. Thus, any kind of academic research on Nepal faces an immediate challenge due to the scarcity of written sources about the country's history, and especially about the history of church and mission in Nepal. Major encyclopedias and many sources about Nepal do not even mention the sizeable Christian population in their description of Nepal's myriad religious expressions.<sup>134</sup> The only widely

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<sup>130</sup> Pål Ketil Botvar, "Endringer i nordmenns religiøse liv/ Changes in the religious lives of Norwegians," in *Religion i dagens Norge*, (ed P. Botvar og U. Schmidt, Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 2010.) 17.

<sup>131</sup> Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Misjon i Omstilling/Leader: Mission in Transition," *Tibetaneren*, 2000.3, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Norma Kehrberg, *The Cross in the Land of the Khukuri*, (Nepal: Ekta Books, 2000.) 131.

<sup>133</sup> Population data from Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, "Nepal," Available from <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/409152/Nepal>>, Internet; accessed 12 May, 2011. Current estimates of the number of Christians in the country vary widely, from the figure above to over 1 million.

<sup>134</sup> For example, Encyclopedia Britannica's article on Nepal, which mentions the Muslim minority in Nepal but not Christians, and John Whelpton's otherwise thorough *A History of Nepal*, which makes only passing

available history of Christianity in Nepal is Dr. Jonathan Lindell's detailed but outdated 1977 book "Nepal and the Gospel of God."<sup>135</sup> The only other available histories of Christianity in Nepal are either unpublished academic papers,<sup>136</sup> books self-published or published by small Nepali publishers,<sup>137</sup> and articles in a few encyclopedias.<sup>138</sup> Mission and church history in Nepal has been partially documented by missionaries themselves.<sup>139</sup>

There are several reasons for this lack of written history. Nepal has a high illiteracy rate<sup>140</sup> and it is still at heart an oral culture—there are not many written histories of Nepal itself, either. It is also an incredibly complex, diverse culture, and organization and communication are overall challenges in Nepal. Other reasons for the lack of written sources are more specific to the situation of Nepali Christians. Until recently, persecution made it dangerous to write specifics about church growth in Nepal. Cindy Perry, for example, makes a point not to mention any living church leaders in her 2000 history.<sup>141</sup> The independent nature of Nepali churches, many of which are small and in rural areas, may make it more difficult to gain an overall picture of Christianity in Nepal.

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reference to Christian conversions in Nepal. Encyclopedia Britannica, "Nepal;" John Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2005,) 158.

<sup>135</sup> Jonathan Lindell, *Nepal and the Gospel of God* (Kathmandu, Nepal: United Mission to Nepal, 1979).

<sup>136</sup> John Barclay, "The Church in Nepal: Analysis of its Gestation and Growth," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Oct. 2009. Pdf full text available from Atla Religion Database.

<sup>137</sup> Cindy Perry, a theologian, evangelist and church historian in Nepal, has written a short *Biographical History of the Church in Nepal* (2000) as well as a comprehensive work on Christianity in the Nepali diaspora. Norma Kehrberg, longtime missionary to Nepal, has written the most recent and perhaps the only thorough empirical study on church growth in Nepal. Her book, *The Cross in the Land of the Khukuri* (2000), presents the results of a survey on motivations and effects of conversion to Christianity for thousands of Nepalis in many different parts of the country. Both Perry and Kehrberg's books, however, are extremely difficult to find outside Nepal. Perry's appears to be self-published and Kehrberg's is available only from Nepali publisher Ekta Books. Cindy Perry, *A Biographical History of the Church in Nepal*, (Nepal Church History Project. Self-published, 2000); Norma Kehrberg, *The Cross in the Land of the Khukuri*, (Nepal: Ekta Books, 2000.)

<sup>138</sup> Jonathan Lindell and Samuel R. Burgoyne, "Nepal," pages 451-466 in *The Church in Asia* (ed. Donald Hoke, Chicago: Moody Press, 1975); Cindy Perry, "Nepal," pg 593-4 in *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity* (ed. Scott Sunquist, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001)

<sup>139</sup> It is clear that there is both need and opportunity for church historians in Nepal. During my stay in Nepal, I did interviews and compiled brief histories of two churches in Pokhara--the first and only written histories these churches had ever had. Yale University is the home of a growing archive of material about Nepali church history, which I hope will inspire researchers to continue to document the recent history of the Nepali church. The piecemeal, partial state of church history in Nepal is a sign of a way in which the churches in Nepal can grow, learning about and making connections to one another, to their own history and to the world church.

<sup>140</sup> Total adult literacy in Nepal is 58% as of 2010. Unicef, "Nepal Statistics"

<[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nepal\\_nepal\\_statistics.html#73](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nepal_nepal_statistics.html#73)>, Internet; accessed 13 May 2011.

<sup>141</sup> Perry, *Biographical History*, xi.

Most of the written histories that exist tell the story of the Nepali church through the stories of the lives of individuals. While the occasional lack of details, overview and objectivity can be frustrating from an academic perspective, the existing church histories from Nepal are incredibly exciting because they contain clues to the hearts of the people involved, their struggles and their love for Christ and each other. Perhaps one needs to be on “story level” to even be able to see what is happening in mission and the church in Nepal, because the heart of the story is one of personal relationships and individual calls and conversions of people touched by God’s love. As Nepali church historian Dr. Rajendra Rongong put it, the story of the church is “His Story” in Nepal—a story of the work of the Holy Spirit in human hearts.<sup>142</sup>

### 3.4.2 Introduction to Nepal

What kind of context are HimalPartner members experiencing, reflecting on and referring to in *Tibetaneren*? Following is a brief history of Christianity in Nepal based on a compilation of the available sources and the author’s own interviews and observations in Nepal, with emphasis on those events and movements that are important for understanding the HimalPartner's work in Nepal, and the organization's understanding and practice of mission in word and deed.

Nepal is a small country in the high Himalayan mountains between India and the Tibetan region of China. The people of Nepal have incredibly diverse languages, cultures and traditions. Their religions range from animism and nature-worship to Hinduism to Tibetan-influenced Buddhism. Syncretism among these religions has always been strong in Nepal. The majority of Nepali’s today identify themselves as Hindu believers.<sup>143</sup> Norwegians involved in HimalPartner mission are thus learning to relate to a complex cultural and spiritual reality in Nepal.

Nepal has never been a colony, which immediately makes it a quite different and rather unique<sup>144</sup> context compared to many other countries in which mission was inextricably

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<sup>142</sup> Dr. Rajendra Rongong, a “grandfather” of the Nepali church, was kind enough to lend me the manuscript of his new book on Nepal’s church history during my stay in Nepal in early February 2011. It was in draft, partially handwritten form and did not have consistent page numbers, but I have cited chapter headings when possible. The book, entitled *The Church History of Nepal: An Indigenous Movement*, is to be published by Nepal's Ekta Books in 2011. When published, it will be the most up-to-date church history of Nepal and to my knowledge the only such book in English by a Nepali author.

<sup>143</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Nepal."

<sup>144</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 132.

intertwined with colonial power. Until the mid-18th century, Nepal was a patchwork of many small kingdoms. In the late 1700's, King Prithvi Narayan Shah succeeded in conquering much of Nepal and unifying it under his stern rule. He declared Nepal a Hindu kingdom, and banished foreigners, including the handful of Catholic monks who had started a church in Nepal.<sup>145</sup> The country remained more or less closed to the outside world for the next 200 years.<sup>146</sup> Life for the majority of Nepalis, who worked as tenant farmers and migrant laborers, was extremely difficult, and development stayed at a virtual standstill.<sup>147</sup>

Nepal is an agricultural society, in a place where farming often appears impossible—the majority of the population<sup>148</sup> subsists on crops grown from spectacularly terraced fields cut into the thin dry soil of the mountainsides.<sup>149</sup> Nepal continues to be one of the poorest countries in Asia,<sup>150</sup> currently ranking 138 of 168 countries on the HDI scale of development.<sup>151</sup> It is a landlocked country and is economically dependent on trade with India<sup>152</sup> and in many cases on sending laborers abroad.<sup>153</sup> In *Tibetaneren*, Norwegian members of HimalPartner describe their meeting with Nepal as a developing country, and discuss the problems they see there and possible ways to solve them.

The theology of missions in Nepal was strongly influenced by the time of waiting and preparation that preceded their entrance to Nepal. During the time that Nepal was a closed and virtually unreached country, many Christians lived and prayed for decades along Nepal's North Indian border, hoping to one day bring the gospel to Nepal. Groups of people formed in the Indian border towns, praying and preparing to enter Nepal with the gospel whenever they gained to opportunity, and dedicated to ministering to Nepali people's physical and spiritual needs. Due to the hardships of life in closed Nepal, many Nepali people moved to North India in hopes of finding work or medical treatment. Some settled there, and some,

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<sup>145</sup> Lindell, *Nepal*, 17, 36-37.

<sup>146</sup> Lindell, *Nepal*, 41.

<sup>147</sup> Lindell, *Nepal*, 63-65, 68.

<sup>148</sup> Around three-fourths. CIA World Factbook, "Nepal," available from <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html>>, Accessed 19 May, 2011.

<sup>149</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Nepal."

<sup>150</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Nepal."

<sup>151</sup> United Nations Development Programme. "Human Development Index and its components". Available from <[http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2010\\_EN\\_Table1\\_reprint.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Table1_reprint.pdf)> Internet; accessed 11 May 2011.

<sup>152</sup> Whelpton, *History*, 4.

<sup>153</sup> Whelpton, *History*, 122.

through contact with missionaries at hospitals and schools, became Christians.<sup>154</sup> They also formed churches and completed a Nepali translation of the Bible.<sup>155</sup> It was these Christians—the foreigners and the ethnic Nepalis—who would go to Nepal with the gospel when the chance came.

### *3.4.3. Church Growth and Christian Mission in Nepal*

The chance for Christian missions to enter Nepal came very suddenly. In 1950, Nepal's king ousted the powerful prime minister in a bloodless coup.<sup>156</sup> Nepal's new ruler proved to be much more open to the outside world and began to grant entrance visas to Westerners, and to a group of American doctors to open a mission hospital in 1953.<sup>157</sup> In order to share the "open door" with as many people as possible and to avoid missionary competition, the American missions invited all the waiting missions along Nepal's border to share the hospital visa as an ecumenical mission. Those who accepted became the United Mission to Nepal, UMN.<sup>158</sup> At around the same time, two British doctors and a group of Nepali Christians asked permission to start a leprosy hospital in the Pokhara district. This group of missionaries would become the International Nepal Fellowship, INF. HimalPartner worked with both umbrella organizations in Nepal, UMN and INF, and continues to do so to this day.<sup>159</sup>

As part of UMN, HimalPartner developed a particular, strongly cooperative view of mission that members in which Nepal and foreign Christians from diverse backgrounds worked together from the beginning.<sup>160</sup> But it was also strongly influenced by limitations on mission work in Nepal. All foreign Christian missionaries in Nepal were bound by an agreement to the government that stipulated that they could not proselytize.<sup>161</sup> All mission programs had to be government-approved, and foreign missionaries were extremely careful to follow the rules.<sup>162</sup> According to the agreement and to Nepali law, foreigners could not

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<sup>154</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 94-95.

<sup>155</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 95.

<sup>156</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, "Nepal," accessed 12 May, 2011.

<sup>157</sup> Lindell, *Nepal*, 142.

<sup>158</sup> Lindell, *Nepal*, 143-144.

<sup>159</sup> For example, "Om oss/ About us" in *Tibetaneren*, 2009.1, 18.

<sup>160</sup> See 4.4.3, 5.3.7.

<sup>161</sup> Lindell, *Nepal*, 255.

<sup>162</sup> Kehrberg tells the story of a UMN missionary who heard that his translator had become a Christian and immediately said "It had nothing to do with me!" Kehrberg, *Cross*, 151.



preach the Christian gospel openly, lead meetings or baptize new believers. They could, however, answer personal questions about their faith, share Bibles and literature at mission hospitals, pray for the sick, and quietly support and witness to Nepali friends.<sup>163</sup> The restrictions, according to Lindell, led UMN members to do a good deal of reflection on God's will and the nature of mission as expressed in the New Testament.<sup>164</sup>

Many Nepali Christians witnessed openly and boldly about their new faith in Jesus, and actively invited others to "taste and see" despite persecution and ostracism by their society.<sup>165</sup> Through these different kinds of witness, individual people in Nepal continued to hear the message of the gospel, and many believed and gave up everything to follow Jesus. In her 2000 survey of first generation Christians in Nepal, Norma Kehrberg found that about a third of those who became Christians before 1970 first heard about Jesus from a foreign mission or from Christian literature, while over half heard from friends and family.<sup>166</sup> After 1970 the number of those who first heard about Jesus from a Nepali pastor increased dramatically as the number of churches grew. This is important background for considering descriptions in *Tibetaneren* of the relationship between evangelism and Nepali church growth.<sup>167</sup>

Due to the government restrictions, and to their own desire to let an authentically Nepali church grow without too much Western influence, expatriate missionaries deliberately chose to leave all church planting or leadership to Nepalis.<sup>168</sup> Nepalis led the new Christian fellowships within Nepal, and missionaries participated as ordinary church members.<sup>169</sup> Some of the first churches arose when Nepali and foreign Christians quietly held prayer and worship meetings together at a mission hospital or school. As such fellowships grew in strength and numbers, it would move away from the mission buildings to a private house, a rented room or even often a chicken shed.<sup>170</sup> House fellowships and cell churches became

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<sup>163</sup> Rongong Manuscript, chapter on "The Role of Expatriates in the History of the Church."

<sup>164</sup> Lindell cites John 20:21, Col 3:17 and 1 Pet 4:10 as examples of UMN's inspirations. Lindell, *Nepal*, 255.

<sup>165</sup> Psalm 34:8

<sup>166</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 152-153.

<sup>167</sup> See 4.4.2, 4.4.3

<sup>168</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 99,199.

<sup>169</sup> Rongong manuscript, chapter on "The Role of Expatriates in the History of the Church."

<sup>170</sup> Rongong manuscript, chapters 9 and 10, and my field research. See Works Cited for dates and Nepali church groups interviewed.

their own congregations, and daughter churches broke away to form new fellowships. The first Nepali churches grew in three main places—Pokhara, Nepalganj and Kathmandu.<sup>171</sup>

It was both forbidden by law for Nepali people to change their religion,<sup>172</sup> and culturally unacceptable for Nepalis to become Christians.<sup>173</sup> Some were jailed for having broken the law against conversion to another religion.<sup>174</sup> In the 1980's, the government intensified official persecution of Christians,<sup>175</sup> and there are stories of interrogations, officials stopping Christians at checkpoints, confiscating their land and burning Bibles and hymnbooks.<sup>176</sup> Because of the real threat of persecution, Nepali churches virtually went underground--they did not keep formal baptism or membership lists, and missionaries kept no written records of church growth.<sup>177</sup> There is still a sense of cautiousness among missionaries in Nepal, and the contributors to *Tibetaneren* about discussing individual conversions to Christianity.<sup>178</sup>

While missions have clearly communicated to the Nepali government their Christian motivations for working in Nepal,<sup>179</sup> Christian missions have had visas to Nepal based on secular development and aid projects that both they and the Nepali government saw a need for. Christian missionaries have been deeply involved in Nepal's huge industrial and economic development over the past 60 years, building up schools, hospitals, businesses and Nepal's hydropower industry. While there are many other NGO's working in Nepal, until the 1990's, United Mission to Nepal was one of the country's largest employers, second only to the government.<sup>180</sup> UMN has always tried to involve Nepali leaders and is continuing to do this, especially now.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Perry, *Biographical History*, 83.

<sup>172</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Nepal."

<sup>173</sup> Many were thrown out of their families and shunned by local society for having broken with Hindu beliefs and traditions. Kehrberg, *Cross*, 156-157.

<sup>174</sup> In 1961, the first group of Nepali Christians in Tansen were thrown in jail after having been baptized, on the grounds that they had broken the law against conversion. Kehrberg, *Cross*, 105.

<sup>175</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 107.

<sup>176</sup> Rongong manuscript, chapter 8.

<sup>177</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 106, 137.

<sup>178</sup> See 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.3.7, 5.3.8.

<sup>179</sup> Lindell, *Nepal*, 254; Dr. Rajendra Rongong, "United Mission to Nepal as I perceive it," in *50 years in God's hand*, (ed United Mission to Nepal, Nepal: Jagadamba Press, 2003,) 88.

<sup>180</sup> Conversation with Tore Skeie, 4 February 2011.

<sup>181</sup> Stefan Ostman, "Into New Territory- a transformed UMN" in *50 Years in God's hand*, (ed United Mission to Nepal, Nepal: Jagadamba Press, 2003,) 105.

#### 3.4.4. Recent Challenges for Christians and Missions in Nepal

The past twenty years have seen immense changes in Nepal. Norma Kehrberg describes modern Nepal as a place of "unrestrained exuberance" at new relative freedom and greater development, mixed with ongoing "doses of sobering reality" of civil war, corruption and poverty.<sup>182</sup> International and government development efforts have yielded mixed and in some cases disappointing results.<sup>183</sup> In the early 1990's Nepal underwent a huge political upheaval and popular demonstrations that marked a move towards democracy, as the king opened the political arena to opposition parties.<sup>184</sup> The 90's also marked the beginning of a Maoist guerrilla uprising and 15-year civil war that would deeply scar the country.<sup>185</sup>

In the time period 2000-2010 that I am analyzing in *Tibetaneren*, Nepal has been shaken by especially strong political upheavals. During that period, struggles between the monarchy and the government led to the king dismissing the government<sup>186</sup> and later, after massive popular demonstrations in 2006, the resignation of the king.<sup>187</sup> The ongoing civil war led to economic and developmental stagnation, further destruction of infrastructure and widespread suffering. In 2006, Maoist rebels signed a fragile but apparently lasting peace agreement and joined in forming the new democratic government.<sup>188</sup> The new government has been plagued by internal strife and stalemates.

The 1990 revolution marked the beginning of an increase in religious freedom in Nepal, and increased openness in the Nepali church.<sup>189</sup> The new constitution in 1990 gave all people in Nepal freedom of religion—at least in theory. Nepali Christians and mission organizations in the country are watching anxiously to see if the new government will do more, both on paper and in practice, to guarantee religious rights and equality than the previous ones. According to Dr. Rongong, the new freedom meant that many more people

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<sup>182</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 130.

<sup>183</sup> Whelpton, *History*, 137.

<sup>184</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Nepal."

<sup>185</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Nepal."

<sup>186</sup> Rose, Leo E. Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, "Nepal, year in review 2002," Available from <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/868415/Nepal-Year-In-Review-2002>> Internet; accessed 12 May 2011.

<sup>187</sup> Keshab Poudel, Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, "Nepal, year in review 2006," Available from <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/868415/Nepal-Year-In-Review-2006>> Internet; accessed 12 May 2011.

<sup>188</sup> Poudel, "Nepal, year in review 2006."

<sup>189</sup> G. Jacobs Blesson, "Nepal, Law and Freedom of Religion in" page 595 in *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity* (ed. Scott Sunquist, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001)

dared to express interest in Christianity and become Christian--<sup>190</sup>the estimated number of Christians increased more than tenfold since 1990.<sup>191</sup> There is as yet no good record of the challenges, the internal controversies and conflicts that Nepali churches have survived in an atmosphere of persecution and rapid social and political change, especially after the 1990 revolution.<sup>192</sup> As the church grew, at times the different roles of foreign and Nepali missionaries led to tension between the Nepali Christians and the missions.<sup>193</sup>

In the new climate of greater religious freedom, a variety of Christian organizations are now freer to enter, bringing with them denominational divisions and the temptations of foreign funding. Nepali church members, always fervent verbal evangelists, are now struggling to have a stronger diaconal practice.<sup>194</sup> In turn, mission umbrella organizations in Nepal are working towards a more "integral," "holistic" view of mission.<sup>195</sup> This is important because it shows that both Nepali churches and missions may be finding that the situation in Nepal has created some imbalances in their emphasis on evangelism or service/action.

Many young Christians in Nepal do not know about the role of foreign mission in Nepal's church history.<sup>196</sup> As venerable pastor Attan Lama in Pokhara told me, it is mostly the old people who remember that Nepali Christians and missionaries worked together to build the church.<sup>197</sup> Many longtime missionaries would count this a bittersweet sign of success—the Nepali church as a whole is strongly and in some ways fiercely independent. However, the relationship of foreign mission and Nepali churches continues to be an important cooperation.

Nepali Christian leader Dr. Ramesh Khatri told me that, “mission in Nepal has always been in crisis”<sup>198</sup> --but perhaps it is going through a special kind of crisis now. Nepal

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<sup>190</sup> Rongong Manuscript, chapter 11.

<sup>191</sup> Perry, "Nepal" in *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*, 595.

<sup>192</sup> Rongong, manuscript, chapter 6, 11

<sup>193</sup> Rongong, manuscript, chapter on "The Role of Expatriates in the History of the Church."

<sup>194</sup> Rongong Manuscript, chapter 13; Mia Voreland, "Ekspløsiv Kirkevekst i Nepal/ Explosive Church Growth in Nepal," *Tibetaneren* 2002.1, 19; Mirjam Bergh, conversation with the author, 24 January, 2011.

<sup>195</sup> Interview with Bal Kumari Gurung, UMN Peacebuilding Department Leader, Feb 4, 2001 Kathmandu

<sup>196</sup> For example, the members of Deep Jyoti Church in Pokhara founded in the early 1990's did not mention missionaries in their description of their church's history. Older members of nearby Lamachour and Ram Ghat churches, however, founded in the late 1960's, remembered a strong relationship with foreign missionaries. Author's interview with Deep Jyoti church elders 16 January 2011, Lamachour church members 18 and January 2011, Ram Ghat church member Buddhi Singh, 31 January, 2011, Pokhara, Nepal.

<sup>197</sup> Senior pastor Attan Lama of Lamachaur Church, Conversation with the author in Pokhara, Nepal, 18 January, 2011.

<sup>198</sup> Conversation with Ramesh Khatri, Kathmandu Nepal, 7 February, 2011.

has developed incredibly fast since the 1950's, and in some senses missionaries today may feel less a less clear sense of being needed than they did 60 years ago, when there were virtually no medical or educational facilities in Nepal.<sup>199</sup> Especially after the advent of more religious freedom and slightly less stringent visa restrictions, many missionaries and organizations have come to Nepal outside of the UMN umbrella. Thus, the large mission organizations are no longer the administrative hubs for mission and development in Nepal. UMN works increasingly through partner organizations that it supports with funding and personnel, rather than complete administration.<sup>200</sup> Organizations like HimalPartner that once worked exclusively through UMN have gained increasing freedom to run their own projects.

Like UMN, HimalPartner is in the process of restructuring and reassessing its role in Nepal.<sup>201</sup> Some projects it supports with money, others with consulting and administration.<sup>202</sup> But the main focus within the organization is still on the sending of missionary professionals to Nepal.<sup>203</sup>

### 3.5 Conclusion

The context of Norway and Nepal bring up important issues for HimalPartner's theology of word and deed must address. As Norwegians, they come from a long tradition of foreign mission societies with a call to share the gospel of Jesus and to serve people in need through creative social action, solidarity, diakonia and development aid. In Nepal, the mission meets a diverse culture, and clear but perhaps bewilderingly complex social and individual cases of need. HimalPartner and other foreign missions have been forbidden to evangelize in Nepal and their presence in Nepal depends on the continued approval of the Nepali government.

The historical context of Norway is a heritage that Norwegian mission members more or less consciously bear with them. The history of the mission in Nepal is both a legacy and a constantly changing reality that they must continue to adapt to. The next chapter presents perspectives from *Tibetaneren* in which HimalPartner members reflect on their mission practice and the relationship between word and deed in this context.

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<sup>199</sup> Conversation with Ragnhild and Tore Skeie, HimalPartner missionaries in Nepal, 4 February, 2011.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with Bal Kumari Gurung, UMN Peacebuilding Department Leader, Kathmandu, Feb 4, 2011.

<sup>201</sup> Conversation with Tore Skeie, Kathmandu, Nepal, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>202</sup> Conversation with Tore Skeie, Kathmandu, Nepal, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>203</sup> , "Om Oss/ About Us," *Tibetaneren*, 2009.1, 18.



## 4. TIBETANEREN RESEARCH

### 4.1 Introduction to Research: Theology of Word and Deed in Mission in *Tibetaneren*

This chapter presents the research: some main perspectives on word and deed in mission from the past ten years of HimalPartner's mission magazine, *Tibetaneren*. There are enough complementary perspectives in *Tibetaneren* that it is possible to follow some main theological themes in the magazine. These themes were often intertwined in the actual texts, but I have separated them here in order to more systematically explore HimalPartner's discussion about the nature of mission.

### 4.2 Mission in word and deed as HimalPartner's God-given calling

The first key ongoing theme in the discussion in *Tibetaneren* is the idea of a God-given call or goal to do mission in word and deed.

HimalPartner's mission statement, as stated in Chapter 3, is "to bring the gospel to the Himalaya region through word and deed."<sup>204</sup> The mission statement is central in *Tibetaneren* and direct references to it appear in various kinds of articles. General secretaries Grethe Raddum and Heidi Westborg Steel, frequently refer to this mission statement in their articles for the 'leader' column at the beginning of each magazine.<sup>205</sup> Not only leaders, but also missionaries and members refer to the mission statement in their articles.<sup>206</sup>

They describe the mission statement as a rallying point and a unifying call in a mission with members with many different backgrounds and kinds of service, an idea I will expand further upon in the analysis. Contributors describe this call both as a personal and as a community task.<sup>207</sup> Tore Skeie, for example, describes a community calling: "the means may vary, but the task is defined, and will give results if we don't give up..."<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> HimalPartner, "Strategi 2010-2014," 3.

<sup>205</sup> For example, Grethe Raddum, "Skatten i ei leirpote./Treasure in clay jars" 2000.6, 2; Heidi Westborg Steel, "Leder: Mobilisering/ Leader: Mobilization," 2010.2, 2.

<sup>206</sup> Tore Skeie, "Leder: Teltmakeren Paulus og Tibetmisjon/Leader: The Tentmaker Paul and HimalPartner", 2001:5, 2; Tullis and Odd Hoftun, "Foredrag ved UMN's 50-års jubileum/ Lecture for UMN's 50-year anniversary," 2005.1, 5; Odd Aksnes, "Tanker om Misjon: Unikt, Unådd og Utfordrende/ Thoughts about Mission: Unique, Unreached and Challenging," 2003.3, 3; Andreas Kolaas, "Tanker om Misjon: Teltmakeren/ Thoughts about Mission: The Tentmaker," 2003.1, 3.

<sup>207</sup> Compare to Mikaelsson on Norwegian mission societies in general, *Fortellinger*, 282.

<sup>208</sup> Tore Skeie, "Leder: Teltmakeren Paulus og Tibetmisjon/Leader: The Tentmaker Paul and HimalPartner", 2001:5, 2.

Many missionaries mention having a personal call to go to Nepal in the articles they write for *Tibetaneren*.<sup>209</sup> For example, in a 2004 interview in *Tibetaneren*, the missionary Bøyum family wrote that:<sup>210</sup>

Called by God, and as missionaries with HimalPartner, the main goal has always been clear to us. By living lives as good witnesses for Jesus Christ, we seek to bring others closer to him, and by helping the weak and poor no matter what religion they belong to.

Oddvar Lund ties the idea of community and personal call together by writing that each individual has specific tasks according to what is given them by God, and their gifts, but are to work in a "goal-oriented" way according to the mission's calling.<sup>211</sup>

While the mission statement makes it clear that HimalPartner's mission involves sharing the gospel both in word and deed, it allows room for a good deal of interpretation. The next three sections describe various perspectives in *Tibetaneren* on mission in holistic mission and to work, "natural" mission and witness through everyday life.

#### 4.2.1 Inseparability of word and deed

Contributors to *Tibetaneren* have various ways of describing word and deed as inseparable in HimalPartner's mission theology. Many authors in *Tibetaneren* specifically describe word and deed in mission as a whole, and even make specific references to theological terms such as "holistic" or "integral" mission. For example, an unattributed heading in 2001.6 read that, "witnessing about Jesus with words...should take place as an integrated part of a holistic Christian lifestyle where love of neighbor is also shown in practical action."<sup>212</sup>

Some describe the nature of HimalPartner as a mission as intrinsically holistic. Editor Bjørn Lyngroth writes that "...HimalPartner has always had a holistic view of life, human

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<sup>209</sup> For example, Eldrid Brekke, "Jeg ville aldri flytte til Nepal/I never wanted to move to Nepal," 2005.4, 10-11.

<sup>210</sup> "Kalt av Gud, og som Tibetmisjonens utsendinger, har vi hele tiden vært klar over hovedmålet. Ved å leve et liv som gode vitner for Jesus Kristus søker vi å bringe andre nærmere Ham, og ved å hjelpe svake og fattige uansett hvilken religion de tilhører." Mary Bøyum, "I vår fars vingård nå som før/ In our father's vineyard now as before," 2004.1, 18.

<sup>211</sup> "Hva din oppgave er til enhver tid, det er en sak mellom deg og Gud. Men vi må tjene i kjærlighet, og med de talentene vi har fått. Derfor er det viktig at vi kjenner misjonens arbeid og oppgaver, slik at vi kan arbeide målrettet til enhver tid!" Oddvar Lund, "Leder:Nasjonale Medarbeidere/Leader: National Colleagues," 2004.1, 2.

<sup>212</sup> "Å vitne om Jesus med ord bør skje på en naturlig måte og som en integrert del av en helhetlig kristen livsstil der nestekjærlighet også vises i praktisk handling." Unattributed article, "Naturlig Vitnetjeneste/ Natural Witnesses," 2001.6, 7.



beings and mission. This understanding of mission combines witness through word and deed with practical and neighbor-loving aid to self-help."<sup>213</sup> In an interview about holistic mission, Tore Skeie "emphasizes the importance of seeing the service of verbal witness and the practical work as a whole, and not as two different things..."<sup>214</sup> Missionary surgeon Tone Rusken wrote as she was preparing to travel to Nepal that she wanted to help people who were sick and "at the same time" share the Christian faith with the people she met.<sup>215</sup>

Sigrun Møgedal, similarly, writes that making a strong dividing line between word and deed is an outdated perspective of mission not in keeping with the example of Jesus' original disciples.<sup>216</sup> Tore Skeie connects holistic mission to a long tradition of the church, with its emphasis on social work as "part of a God-given holistic task involving spirit, soul and body".<sup>217</sup>

#### *4.2.2 Subtle division between word and deed*

In another sense, however, missionaries in HimalPartner seem to make a distinction in their writing between word and deed. They often do this subtly and perhaps unconsciously by describing their work in pairs. For example, Einar Kippenes writes:<sup>218</sup>

Mission is at its heart one thing, a responsibility to communicate...The driving force behind mission work is a personal conviction that every person who knows the contents of the gospel will communicate both the gospel of God's love, as His Son showed us, and share the good things he has given us, as human beings, to use...

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<sup>213</sup> "Misjon i Tibetmisjonens regi har alltid vært preget av helhetlig syn på livet, mennesket og misjon. Denne misjonsforståelsen kombinerer forkynnelse gjennom ord og gjerning med praktisk og nestekjærlig hjelp til selvhjelp." Bjørn Lyngroth, "Helhetlig Misjon/ Holistic Mission," 2007.4, 10.

<sup>214</sup> "Skeie understreker betydningen av å se den verbale vitnetjenesten og det praktiske arbeidet som en helhet, og ikke som to atskilte ting." Unattributed article, "Naturlig Vitnetjeneste/ Natural Witnesses," 2001.6, 7.

<sup>215</sup> Interview with Tone Rusken in Bjørn Lyngroth, "Kirurg til Tansen/ Surgeon to Tansen," 2009.3, 10-11.

<sup>216</sup> Sigrun Møgedal, "Tanker om misjon: Disipler på Landeveien/ Thoughts about Mission: Disciples on a Country Road," 2002.1, 3.

<sup>217</sup> "Kyrkja har også meir enn nokon andre, tradisjon for å utføra sosialt arbeid som del av eit Gudgjeve holistisk oppdrag der ånd, sjel og lekam inngår." Tore Skeie, "Kva kan vi yta?/What can we contribute?," 2010.1, 9.

<sup>218</sup> "Misjon er i bunn og grunn en ting, et formidleransvar...Drivkraften bak misjonens arbeid er en personlig overbevisning om at hvert enkelt menneske som kjenner evangeliets innhold, vil formidle både budskapet om Guds kjærlighet, slik hans sønn viste oss, og dele de goder han har gitt oss som menneskehet å bruke..." Einar Kippenes, "Tanker om Misjon: Kjøp, Forbruk og Misjon/ Thoughts about Mission: Buying, Consumption and Mission," 2002.3. 3.

Heidi Westborg Steel makes reference at one point to two "separate, equal callings" of mission in word and deed in Nepal<sup>219</sup> but such direct descriptions of a dualistic understanding of mission are rare in *Tibetaneren*.

There are, however, some descriptions that divide the practical work of HimalPartner's "evangelizing" and "developing" missions. For example, Andreas Kolaas writes, "In practice, we see that many missionaries from [HimalPartner] give valuable support both to those who focus on building the local church, and to those who want to contribute to "building the country."<sup>220</sup> Here he describes church-building and development work as two separate activities done by different people that the mission can support.

#### 4.2.3 "Working mission"

HimalPartner considers itself a "working mission," with methods that some have considered relatively unorthodox by some--sending out professionals to work as Christian missionaries in development aid projects.<sup>221</sup> It is natural, then, that HimalPartner should have many members who reflect on work as a form of mission in word and deed. In *Tibetaneren*, six different ways emerge of describing work as a form of witness to Jesus.

The first way to show that HimalPartner's work is missional is to use Christian references and words to interpret what might otherwise look like a secular activity, like working in a hospital or building a power plant, in a spiritual way. Often this means a short theological reflection at the beginning or end of an article. For example, in the article "What can we contribute?" Tore Skeie cites the mission statement, says that their actions in Nepal will be their witness, and then describes practical areas he feels they can contribute to in Nepal, such as the development of psychiatric resources and hydropower industry.<sup>222</sup>

Second, a few articles described what makes deeds missional as the missional implications of their work primarily in terms of integrity and ethics. For example, longtime missionary Odd Hoftun described how missionary host families at the Technical School in

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<sup>219</sup> Heidi Westborg Steel, "Leder: Mobilisering/ Leader: Mobilization," 2010.2, 2.

<sup>220</sup> "I praksis ser vi derfor at mange utsendinger fra vår misjon gir verdifull støtte til både dem som fokuserer på å bygge den lokale kirken og til dem som vil bidra til "å bygge lande." Andreas Kolaas, "Tanker om Misjon: Teltmakeren/ Thoughts about Mission: The Tentmaker," 2003.1, 3.

<sup>221</sup> Andreas Kolaas, "Tanker om Misjon: Teltmakeren/ Thoughts about Mission: The Tentmaker," 2003.1, 3.

<sup>222</sup> Tore Skeie, "Kva kan vi yta?/What can we contribute?," 2010.1, 9.

Butwal tried to give apprentices a background in Christian work ethics."<sup>223</sup> For example, Gunnar and Evelyn Mollestad write,<sup>224</sup>

As Christians, we are motivated for evangelism, even though we don't see ourselves as traditional evangelists. We want to be good professionals and through the practice of our professions we want to communicate Christian values.

Third, when Oddvar Lund challenges mission members to be "goal-oriented" in their work according to the mission statement, he underscores one line of thinking in which work is mission because of its motivation, direction and rootedness in a call from God.<sup>225</sup>

Similarly, Kåre Mangersenes compares the diverse volunteers in HimalPartner to Jesus' parable of calling workers to His vineyard from Matthew 20.<sup>226</sup>

Fourth, many members of HimalPartner describe work as both a means to<sup>227</sup> and form of evangelism. Odd Hoftun said in an interview, "It turned out that active evangelism was forbidden, so we accepted a personal witness in life and service. In practice this was perhaps just as good a channel for the message as word and evangelism alone."<sup>228</sup> Many describe work as a form of witness because service is a sign of authentic Christian faith. Former board chairman Oddvar Lund put it particularly strongly: "Such a holistic form of mission gives Christians a credibility that evangelism by itself doesn't."<sup>229</sup> Andreas Kolaas also emphasized the credibility of good works in Christian life in his description of tentmaking strategies.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Odd Hoftun interviewed in Odd Aksnes, "Fra Fjellfolk til Fjellfolk/ From one mountain people to another," 2002.1, 10-11.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Gunnar and Evelyn Mollestad in Bjørn Lyngroth, "Evangeliet, Eventyr og Global Skjevhet/ The Gospel, Adventure and Global Inequality," 2009.3, 6-7.

<sup>225</sup> "That is why it is important that we know the mission's work and tasks, such that we can at every time be working in a purpose-driven way!" ["Derfor er det viktig at vi kjenner misjonens arbeid og oppgaver, slik at vi kan arbeide målrettet til enhver tid!"] Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Inspirasjon og Arbeid!/ Leader: Inspiration and Work!" 2003.4, 2.

<sup>226</sup> Kåre Mangersenes, "Andakt: Arbeid i vinhagen/ Devotional: Work in the Vineyard," 2006.1, 15.

<sup>227</sup> Freere, "Takk for tiden in Nepal/Thank you for the time in Nepal," 2006.4, 10-11.

<sup>228</sup> "Det viste seg at om aktiv evangelisering var forbudt, så aksepterte man de personlige vitnesbyrd i liv og tjeneste. I praksis var kanskje dette en like god kanal for budskapet som ord og forkynnelse alene." Bjørn Lyngroth, "En Kraftig Historie/ A Powerful Story [Interview with Odd and Tullis Hoftun]," 2008.2, 12,13.

<sup>229</sup> "En slik helhetlig form for misjon gir de kristne en troverdighet som ensidig evangelisering ikke gir." Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Misjon for fremtiden/ Leader: Mission for the future," 2002.1, 2.

<sup>230</sup> Andreas Kolaas, "Tanker om Misjon: Teltmakeren/ Thoughts about Mission: The Tentmaker," 2003.1, 3.

I will give more examples of work described as a means and form of mission in the next section.

The position that work *only* had value for its role in evangelism would be a highly unlikely one for HimalPartner members to take, due to their partner relationship to the Nepali church and the Nepali government's ban on foreign evangelism. Oddvar Lund writes that work has a value in itself, and isn't just an "excuse to evangelize."<sup>231</sup>

A fifth way to express the role of work in an understanding of mission is to use terms or references that describe work with a missional dimension. Several articles used the words diakonia<sup>232</sup> and tentmaking<sup>233</sup> to describe the missional nature of their work. Members also compare HimalPartner's work to the practice of famous Christians whose work was a witness to the Gospel. Several, including Tullis Hoftun, draw parallels to the apostle Paul, who worked to support himself as he travelled and shared the gospel in the first century.<sup>234</sup> Grethe Raddum,<sup>235</sup> Jostein Holm<sup>236</sup> and several others<sup>237</sup> point to Hans Nielsen Hauge as a strong source of inspiration for the mission's method of working and changing society led by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, a sixth way HimalPartner members describe the relationship between words and deed in working mission is through the idea that missionaries can "point to Jesus" through their lives and work<sup>238</sup> In one of her letters in *Tibetaneren*, missionary Veronika

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<sup>231</sup> "Påskudd for å evangelisere" Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Misjon for framtiden/ Leader: Mission for the future," 2002.1, 2.

<sup>232</sup> Mia Voreland, "Eksplosiv Kirkevekst i Nepal/ Explosive Church Growth in Nepal," 2002.1, 19; Tone Rusken, "Ein Gledesbodskap/ A Message of Joy," 2010.2, 6-7.

<sup>233</sup> Odd Aksnes describes TM as a "tentmaker mission with a strong diaconal profile" ("teltmakermisjon med sterk diakonal profil." Odd Aksnes, "Fra Fjellfolk til Fjellfolk/ From one Mountain People to another", *Tibetaneren*, 2002.1, 10-11.

<sup>234</sup> Odd Hoftun, "En Dør Ble Satt på Gløtt/A Door Was Left Open," 2007.1, 5; Tullis Hoftun, "Andakt: De 5 "derfor" i Paulus annet brev til korinterne kapittel 4 og 5/ Devotional: The 5 "therefores" in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians chapter 4 and 5," 2005.4, 15; Andreas Kolaas, "Tanker om Misjon: teltmakeren/ Thoughts about mission: the tentmaker," 2003.1, 3.

<sup>235</sup> Grethe Raddum, "Leder: utvikling som fører til forandring/Leader: Development that leads to change," 2007.3, 2.

<sup>236</sup> Jostein Holm, "Leder: ut av den bunnløse fattigdommen/ Leader: Out of the Bottomless Poverty" 2010.1, 2.

<sup>237</sup> Bjørn Lyngroth, "En Kraftig Historie/ A Powerful Story [Interview with Odd and Tullis Hoftun]," 2008.2, 12,13; Andreas Kolaas, "Vennesamfunn: Felleskap som skaper rom for frelseren/ Communities of friends: Fellowships that make room for the Savior," 2007.5, 2.

<sup>238</sup> Veronika Gundersen, "Jeg har også blitt forandret/ I have also been changed," 2011.1, 11.

Gundersen mentions trying to meet people in Nepal the way Jesus would.<sup>239</sup> Another good example of this is Eva Gilje's devotional in 2004.2.<sup>240</sup>

With the life we live, we can also join in witnessing to the Gospel [forkynne evangeliet] to our family, neighbors and friends. By holding ourselves to the commandments and to Jesus' teaching, among other things about loving the Lord God with all our heart and all our mind, and our neighbors as ourselves, we contribute to this. In Nepal we were to serve the Nepali people in the name and spirit of Jesus.

Arnfinn Eng interprets all service as a form of witness:<sup>241</sup>

All our service, whether it is youth work, mission, diakonia, evangelism, teaching--whatever it is, it has one purpose: to witness to Jesus Christ as Lord...Through our lives we are allowed to point to he who is the life-giver, through our service we are allowed to share Jesus' word; words of peace, words of victory...

#### 4.2.4 *Natural witness*

Within their descriptions of the mission's work, many HimalPartner members bring up the idea that "working mission" is a "natural" method of sharing the Gospel. Throughout the magazine many mention the importance of "ordinary," authentic faith in daily life--Jesus "everyday love" and presence,<sup>242</sup> "the many small victories in life,"<sup>243</sup> missionaries that are "just like the rest of us."<sup>244</sup> But in what ways do they describe mission as "natural?"

Some describe their mission work in Nepal as having a "natural" motivation. Oddvar Lund describes sharing "surplus" Norwegian professional competence in underdeveloped countries as a "natural expression for Christian love of neighbor."<sup>245</sup> Westborg Steel even describes mission as natural not just for Christians but for believers of all religions--it is "natural" to share what one believes in.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Veronika Gundersen, "Gud--nærmere i Nepal?/ God--closer in Nepal?" 2009.4, 8-9.

<sup>240</sup> "Med det livet vi lever, kan vi også være med på å forkynne evangeliet til familie, naboer og venner. Ved at vi holder oss til budene og til Jesu lære, bl. a. om å elske herren Gud av hele vårt hjerte og av hele vår forstand og vår neste som oss selv, bidrar vi til dette." Eva Gilje, "Andakt: en rød kjærlighet på pinne/ Devotional: A red lollipop," 2004.2, 19.

<sup>241</sup> "All vår tjeneste, enten det er ungdomsarbeid, misjon, diakoni, forkynnelse, undervisning--hva det enn er, har ett formål: å forkynne Jesus Kristus som Herre....Gjennom våre liv skal vi få lov å peke på han som er livgiveren, gjennom vår tjeneste skal vi få lov til å bringe Jesu ord videre; ord om fred, ord om seier...." Arnfinn Eng "Andakt: ikke ved oss selv/ Devotional: Not by ourselves," 2008.2, 3.

<sup>242</sup> Marianne Næss, "Andakt: En Kaffe med Jesus?/ Devotional: Coffee with Jesus?" 2004:5, 15.

<sup>243</sup> Andreas Kolaas, "Leder: Det gode liv/ Leader: the good life," 2006.3, 2.

<sup>244</sup> Grethe Raddum, "Skatten i ei leirpote,/Treasure in clay jars" 2000.6, 2.

<sup>245</sup> Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Misjon for framtiden/ Leader: Mission for the future," 2002.1, 2.

<sup>246</sup> Heidi Westborg Steel, "Misjon, religion og bistand/ Mission, religion and development," 2010.5, 5.

Missionaries also describe their practice of evangelism as natural. Some describe "working mission" as natural because it allows people to form relationships in informal, non-religious settings, which can later provide "natural" opportunities for witness.<sup>247</sup> In a printed interview titled "Naturlig Vitnetjeneste/ Natural Witness," Dorothea Vestøl gives a good description of her understanding of a natural way of witnessing.<sup>248</sup>

When the gospel means something for me in my everyday life, it "dribbles" out whether I want it to or not. I didn't go around the whole time consciously thinking, "now I've got to witness," but I tried to live close to God. Then the opportunities present themselves. You have to be conscientious, but there doesn't need to be any artificial pressure....It was natural to take my Bible with me outside and sit under a tree when I was going to read. When people saw that, they asked what kind of a book I was reading.

Vestøl expresses her practice as a missionary as an un-self-conscious, authentic expression of her personal relationship to Jesus and practice of her faith. She quietly but consciously tried to invite her neighbors' curiosity by reading her Bible in public, a practice that she said was natural in Nepali culture, where people often do things outside.<sup>249</sup>

#### 4.2.5 Holistic mission and a longing for wholeness

The desire for a natural, balanced form of mission that is genuine in all areas of a Christian's life can be extended to connect to a longing for *global* wholeness and integrity in mission that also comes out in *Tibetaneren*. Some HimalPartner members say that they are seeking a kind

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<sup>247</sup> Andreas Kolaas says that tentmakers can reach people "in the midst of their everyday lives, and in completely natural meeting places. This strategy would be in line with what we often experience; people come to faith through friendship and trust over a longer period of time." ["...midt i deres hverdag og på helt naturlige møtesteder. En slik strategi vil være i tråd med det vi ofte opplever; folk kommer til tro gjennom vennskap og tillit over lenger tid."] Andreas Kolaas, "Tanker om Misjon: telmakeren/ Thoughts about mission: the tentmaker," 2003.1, 3; "Witnessing about Jesus with words should happen in a natural way"..."Å vitne om Jesus med ord bør skje på en naturlig måte." Unattributed article, "Naturlig Vitnetjeneste/ Natural Witnesses," 2001.6, 7.

<sup>248</sup> "Når evangeliet har betydning for meg i min hverdag, så "tyter" det ut enten jeg vil det eller ei. Jeg gikk ikke hele tiden omkring og var opptatt av at "nå må jeg vitne," men jeg prøvde å leve nær Gud. Da gir anledningene seg selv. Man må vre bevisst, men det behøver ikke være et kunstig press, sier Dorothea. Litt kreativitet kommer likevel godt med...Vi måtte prøve å finne ut hva vi burde gjøre der vi var for å skape anledninger. I deres kultur var det for eksempel vanlig å gjøre ting ute istedenfor inne alene, slik vi er vant til. Det var naturlig å ta med seg Bibelen ut og sitte under et tre når jeg skulle lese. Da folk så det, spurte de om hva slags bok jeg leste..." Interview with Dorothea Vestøl, unattributed article, "Naturlig Vitnetjeneste/ Natural Witnesses," 2001.6, 7.

<sup>249</sup> Interview with Dorothea Vestøl, unattributed article, "Naturlig Vitnetjeneste/ Natural Witnesses," 2001.6, 7.

of balance and wholeness in their lives in Norway and Nepal.<sup>250</sup> In a *Tibetaneren* Christmas letter in 2004, missionary such as May Britt Aanundsen compares poverty in Nepal with the widespread problem of loneliness in Norway and writes that both bring up deep questions about how she should live as a Christian.<sup>251</sup> Gunnar and Evelyn Mollestad wrote that they want to make sure that "being a Christian isn't limited to one area of life" but was "part of us all the time."<sup>252</sup> Odd Hoftun echoes the same thought when he says that, "the call to service is the same abroad and at home".<sup>253</sup>

This sense of a whole missionary calling for all parts and stages of life is very clear in the responses and thoughts of some missionaries returning to Norway after their service in Nepal. The Bøyum family, for example, explained in an article titled "In our father's vineyard now as before" that they will continue to serve God in their home country,<sup>254</sup> comparing both England and Nepal to the "vineyard" images Jesus uses to describe the kingdom of God.<sup>255</sup> Mia and Asbjørn Voreland, too, wrote that they had "simply changed mission fields" on returning to Norway.<sup>256</sup>

### 4.3 Mission in word/deed as a response to suffering

Another extremely important theme in *Tibetaneren* is that of mission in word and deed as a response to suffering, poverty and injustice in Nepal.

#### 4.3.1 Discipleship

Some magazine contributors formulate their involvement in Nepal mission development work as a form of discipleship of Jesus. They describe Jesus' service and life among those

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<sup>250</sup> May Britt Aanundsen, "Julehilsen: På solsiden av verdens tak/Christmas letter: On the sunny side of the roof of the world," 2004.5, 13.

<sup>251</sup> May Britt Aanundsen, "Julehilsen: På solsiden av verdens tak/Christmas letter: On the sunny side of the roof of the world," 2004.5, 13.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Gunnar and Evelyn Mollestad in Bjørn Lyngroth, "Evangeliet, Eventyr og Global Skjevhet/ The Gospel, Adventure and Global Inequality," 2009.3, 6-7.

<sup>253</sup> "Utfordringen til tjeneste er den samme ute og hjemme, uavhengig av sted og omstendigheter." Odd Hoftun, "Tanker om misjon: Misjonsfamilier/ Thoughts about mission: Mission families," 2002.2, 3.

<sup>254</sup> Mary Bøyum, "I vår fars vingård nå som før/ In our father's vineyard now as before," 2004.1, 18.

<sup>255</sup> Jesus parable of the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16

<sup>256</sup> Interview with Asbjørn and Mia Voreland in Steinar Glimsdal, "Vi har bare skiftet misjonsmark/We have just changed mission fields," 2002.4, 4-5.

who suffer as an example they are trying to follow.<sup>257</sup> Andreas Kolaas summarizes some key motivations for mission in word and deed.<sup>258</sup>

Our Christian faith is not credible if it does not express itself in active engagement for the poor and needy. We are challenged to deeds of faith. He who said: "I am the bread of life," [Jesus] is always connected to our hungry sisters and brothers. We can follow the one [Jesus] who wants to give "the living water" by, among other things, helping some people to gain access to clean water. Faith is never more spiritual than when it challenges us to practical actions for our fellow human beings.

Another interesting example is a devotional by former missionary Bjørn Ødegaard, entitled "The Dance in the Dumpster."<sup>259</sup> He remembers seeing a poor Nepali man dancing in a dumpster after finding the clothes Ødegaard had just thrown away. Ødegaard refers to Jesus, who "met people who were bound by sickness and poverty" and told a lame man to "stand up, take your mat and walk."<sup>260</sup> Jesus, Ødegaard writes, "built up his fellow men so that they could manage on their own."<sup>261</sup> Jesus didn't just look after their physical needs but also their spiritual needs, as "the bread of life."<sup>262</sup> Ødegaard goes on to say that, "we can't often do physical miracles the way Jesus did, but we can share the bread of life and we can give knowledge, education and create jobs."<sup>263</sup>

Former long-term missionary Sigrun Møgedal gives a third powerful example of this kind of discipleship thinking in her contribution to the "Thoughts about mission" column in *Tibetaneren* 2002.1. Sigrun describes mission that responds to needs in developing countries

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<sup>257</sup> "å etterfølge Jesus, det er å komme som tjener for folket" Odd Hoftun interviewed in Odd Aksnes, "Fra Fjellfolk til Fjellfolk/ From one mountain people to another," 2002.1, 10-11.

<sup>258</sup> "Vår kristne tro blir ikke troverdig om den ikke gir seg utslag i aktivt engasjement for de fattige og nødlidende. Vi utfordres til troshandlinger. Han som sa: "Jeg er livets brød", er for alltid knyttet sammen med vår sultne søster og bror. Han som vil gi "det levende vann", kan vi følge ved å bl.a. bidra til at noen mennesker får tilgang til rent vann. Troen blir aldri mer åndelig enn at den utfordrer oss til praktiske handlinger overfor våre medmennesker." Andreas Kolaas, "Leder: Det gode liv/ Leader: the good life," 2006.3, 2.

<sup>259</sup> Bjørn Ødegaard, "Dansen i Containeren/ Devotional: The Dance in the Dumpster," 2001.5, 14.

<sup>260</sup> "Det gjorde Jesus når han møtte folk som var bundet av sykdom og fattigdom. "Stå opp, ta båren din og gå hjem". Den lame ble satt i stand til å leve et nytt liv for alltid." Bjørn Ødegaard, "Andakt: Dansen i Containeren/ Devotional: The Dance in the Dumpster," 2001.5, 14.  
Mark 2:9, John 5:8.

<sup>261</sup> "Jesus tenkte langsiktig. Han bygde opp sine medmennesker så de kunne klare seg selv." Bjørn Ødegaard, "Andakt: Dansen i Containeren/ Devotional: The Dance in the Dumpster," 2001.5, 14.

<sup>262</sup> John 6:35 "Jeg er brødet som kommer ned fra himmelen...den som spiser dette brødet skal leve i all evighet." Igjen har Jesus et langsiktig perspektiv." Bjørn Ødegaard, "Andakt: Dansen i Containeren/ Devotional: The Dance in the Dumpster," 2001.5, 14;

<sup>263</sup> "Vi kan sjeldent utføre fysiske mirakler slik Jesus gjorde, men vi kan dele ut livets brød og vi kan gi kunnskap, utdanning og skape arbeidsplasser." Bjørn Ødegaard, "Andakt: Dansen i Containeren/ Devotional: The Dance in the Dumpster," 2001.5, 14.



such as Nepal as an integral response to Jesus' Great Commission in specific, remote contexts.<sup>264</sup>

Jesus sent his first disciples out on the country road. He does that today, too. The mission is the same, to let all people know that God's kingdom is near. That means we need to actively go into the reality that is on the side of the country road. With the values of God's kingdom. To comfort the needy and protect the weak. To confirm human worth and inviolability. To stand for compassion...To serve and fight for the values of God's kingdom. And to point to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

#### 4.3.2 *Deeds as expressions of compassion and love*

The connection between faith and missionary responses to suffering is on the one hand linked to compassion and love. There are many more Biblical passages to support a view of mission as love than are referenced in *Tibetaneren*. Editor Odd Aksnes cites Jesus' Great Commandment as an inspiration for mission:<sup>265</sup>

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. But another is just as great: you shall love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>266</sup> This is the way that Jesus summarizes the Scriptures and what he stands for. And he says that both commandments are equally great, a balance that Christians have occasionally had difficulties with...

Frank Rune Dale uses the Norwegian phrase "*å ha naud for noen*," literally "to have need for someone," which means to feel a strong sense of compassion and desire to do something for another person in trouble.<sup>267</sup> In an article written after she attended a missionary conference in Mumbai, where she witnessed young children sleeping on the streets, Eldrid Brekke wrote

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<sup>264</sup> "Jesus sendte sine første disipler ut på landeveien. Det gjør han også i dag. Oppdraget er det samme, å la alle få vite at Guds rike er nær. Da må vi gå aktivt inn i den virkeligheten som er langs landeveien. Med Guds rikets verdier. Lindre nød og verne om den svake. Bekrefte menneskers verdighet og ukrenkelighet. Stå for barmhjertighet og rettferdighet...Tjene og kjempe for Guds rikets verdier. Og peke på Jesus som Herre og Frelser. Sigrun Møgedal, "Tanker om misjon: Disipler på Landeveien/ Thoughts about Mission: Disciples on a Country Road," 2002.1, 3.

<sup>265</sup> "Du skal elske Herren din Gud av hele ditt hjerte og av hele din sjel og av all din forstand. Dette er det største og første bud. Men et annet er like stort: Du skal elske din neste som deg selv. På disse to bud hviler hele loven og profetene." Slik sammenfatter Jesus Skriften og det han står for. Og han sier at begge budene er like store. En balanse kristne av og til har hatt vanskeligheter med. "Konservative" kristne har hatt tendens til å gjøre det første større enn det andre... Odd Aksnes, "Tanker om misjon: Et annet er like stort/ Thoughts about mission: another is just as great." 2002.5, 3.

<sup>266</sup> Matthew 22:36-40

<sup>267</sup> Frank Dale, "Andakt: Ei uventa hilsning/ Devotional: An unexpected greeting," 2006.2, 19.

that she was glad to know that there were other Christian "brothers and sisters" in that citing serving people by "showing God's love in word and deed".<sup>268</sup>

The idea of 'making Gods love visible' is a common theme in the discussion within *Tibetaneren* about mission.<sup>269</sup> Åslaug Fossmark, a shorter-term missionary in Kathmandu, describes their work with handicapped children as "a strong witness in Nepal that God's great love is for everyone."<sup>270</sup> She refers to the implicit witness in Christians showing love to people who might not have previously been thought worthy of love in much of Nepali society. Another idea connected to love in *Tibetaneren* is the idea that loving others creates "ripple effects."<sup>271</sup>

Love and compassion are clearly central motivations for mission work in *Tibetaneren*. However, on the whole, the concept of love and compassion is not the most common or popular emphasis for describing a Christian response to suffering within *Tibetaneren*.

#### 4.3.3 Mission as an expression of solidarity

Rather than emphasizing charity and compassion as responses to suffering, contributors to *Tibetaneren* focus more on ideas of Christian solidarity and the justice of the Gospel. The idea of solidarity or a "fellowship of suffering" with people in Nepal is sometimes used to describe the response of Christian missions to world suffering.<sup>272</sup> This is in keeping with the Biblically inspired emphasis on a kind of incarnational mission, in the spirit of Jesus who "bore our infirmities."<sup>273</sup>

Sigrun Møgedal's article in 2002.1 is a particularly eloquent example of a theology of Christian solidarity as a response to poverty and injustice. She writes that all Christians are called,<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Eldrid Brekke, "Mumbai Håp/ Mumbai Hope," 2007.5, 4.

<sup>269</sup> For example, Tore Skeie quotes a Norwegian mission leader as saying that "mission is a visible expression that someone cares," Tore Skeie, "Leader: Aksjon Håp/ Leader: Action Hope," 2000.7, 2.

<sup>270</sup> Åslaug Fossmark, "Barna som skulle gjemmes bort/ The children that would have been hidden," 2002.3, 14-15.

<sup>271</sup> Bimala Pokharel, "Fri fra Slaveri/ Free from Slavery," 2010.2, 4-5. Heidi Westborg Steel, "Mobilisering/ Mobilization," 2010.2, 2.

<sup>272</sup> Grethe Raddum, "Leder: I Fængsel for sin tro/ Leader: In jail for their faith," 2001.1, 2.

<sup>273</sup> Isaiah 53:4 and Matthew 8:17, cited in Asbjørn Holm, "Andakt: Sammen med Herren/ Devotional: With the Lord" 2000.3, 10.

<sup>274</sup> å leve og tjene i den virkeligheten som er akkurat der. Midt i den angsten, den nøden, den lengselen og det håpet som mennesker der er fylt av. Stå sammen. Bære sammen. Kjempe sammen... Som tegn på at Jesus lever...Heller enn korsfarere trenges nå disipler som våger å være sårbare, mestrer å lytte og skaper broer av tillit gjennom nærvær og tjeneste i møte med nød og utrygghet." Sigrun Møgedal, "Tanker om Misjon: Disipler på landeveien/Thoughts about mission: disciples on the country road," 2002.1, 3.

...To live and serve in the reality of the very place [to which God has called us]. In the midst of the angst, the need, the longing and the hope that humans are full of. To stand together, bear [loads] together, fight together...As a sign that Jesus lives...Rather than crusaders, we need disciples now that dare to be vulnerable, masters of listening and creating bridges of trust through nearness and service when meeting need and danger.

Both in this quote and her quote above, Sigrun Møgedal connects the act of going to Nepal and participating in life there as an act of Christian solidarity with Nepali people. The idea of solidarity is also reflected in the idea of partnership in mission with Nepali Christians, described below.

#### 4.4 Mission and human limitations

Another way HimalPartner members reflect their understanding of mission is by asking difficult questions about whether they themselves are really able to help the people they live with and care about in Nepal through their words and deeds. The following sections present different kinds of reflections on the role of missionaries in word and deed, their relationship to the results of mission in Nepal, and the relationship of missionaries and results to the work of God.

##### 4.4.1 Mission and human inadequacy

There is a good deal of subtext in *Tibetaneren* that implies that despite the highly positive portrayal of mission by the magazine, many in the mission struggle with a sense of inadequacy and doubts about their role in Nepal and its direct results.

Some simply find unanswered questions when faced with immense suffering and injustice, and write openly about their questions in *Tibetaneren*. One missionary in Nepal writes that her questions about how she should live ethically and holistically in the context of Nepal, "both remain unanswered and are answered" through the steps she takes each day.<sup>275</sup>

Others write quite openly about experiences where they questioned their own roles as missionaries and development aid workers, or where they felt both a strong sense of compassion and a deep sense of inadequacy. Missionary Asbjørn Voreland, for example, tells the story of Maila, a young Nepali girl he and his family met who lived in virtual slavery

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<sup>275</sup> May Britt Aanundsen, "Julehilsen: På solsiden av verdens tak/Christmas letter: On the sunny side of the roof of the world," 2004.6, 13.

to a restaurant owner.<sup>276</sup> After commenting on his feeling of helplessness, knowing the money he gave her would go into the pockets of her master, he cites Matthew 25: 44-45, where Jesus says that what we do to the poorest and weakest we do to him.

In the "dumpster" quote above, Bjørn Ødegaard sees his old clothes as a short-term solution for the impoverished man in the dumpster. Another member, Ann Magritt Harstad, writes that while the tasks may seem impossible, if she can help just a little bit, it will have been worth it.<sup>277</sup>

This sense of human inadequacy also appears in HimalPartner members' reflections on evangelism. For example, Grethe Raddum cites the Bible passage from 2 Corinthians 4:7 in which the apostle Paul writes that we as Christians carry "treasure in clay jars"--we are cracked and imperfect vessels through which the real treasure of God's grace can shine.<sup>278</sup> In a devotional in 2008.2, Arnfinn Eng cites the verse before, 2nd Corinthians 4:5: "We do not witness to ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants--for Jesus' sake." We are lucky, he writes, not to be pointing to ourselves as weak and painfully inadequate human beings, but witnessing to Jesus Christ as Lord and "life-giver". This is both "liberating, because the focus is on Jesus and not on ourselves--and challenging, because it calls us to serve."<sup>279</sup>

#### 4.4.2 *Mission in word under Nepal's evangelism ban*

The way contributors to *Tibetaneren* reflect on their practice of evangelism in specific, concrete terms is related to their reflections on their role and relationship to the Nepali church. Since church growth is implicitly related to the motivations of evangelism--as a desirable result--HimalPartner members' reflections on the Nepali church are relevant and important to their understanding of mission in word and deed.

In eyewitness descriptions of the Nepali church in *Tibetaneren*, the missionaries themselves are often virtually absent, or present only as passive observers. Even eyewitness descriptions of what is happening in a specific church<sup>280</sup> are told from the perspective of

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<sup>276</sup> Asbjørn Voreland, "En av disse minste/ One of these little ones," 2000.8.

<sup>277</sup> Ann Margritt Harstad, "Andakt: Håp/ Devotional: Hope," 2007.3, 3.

<sup>278</sup> Grethe Raddum, "Leder: Skatten i ei leirpotte/ Leader: Treasure in a clay jar," 2000.6, 2.

<sup>279</sup> Arnfinn Eng "Andakt: ikke ved oss selv/ Devotional: Not by ourselves," 2008.2, 3.

<sup>280</sup> For example, Asbjørn Voreland, "Dette er kirkevekst på grasrotplan/This is church growth on a grassroots level," 2006.4, 12.

seemingly passive onlookers or marginal participants.<sup>281</sup> Mirjam Bergh's cooperation with Nepali pastors to train Christian leaders in methods of handling counseling needs in the Nepali church is a recent major exception.<sup>282</sup>

Oddvar Lund's article in 2000.3 is a good example of HimalPartner members' use of passive voice when describing the growth of the Nepali church. In a brief sketch of the mission's history he describes the "encouraging news" of the mission's practical work, and then describes church growth by saying that that "a message came the gospel was spreading across the country." In a very careful way, he implies that the mission had some relationship to both the development and the growth of churches, but it is completely unclear what the relationship might have been between the witness and the results. Similarly, in their jubilee article for a celebration of 50 years of mission in Nepal, pioneer missionaries Odd and Tullis Hoftun wrote of the "incredible privilege" of being able to "watch" the Nepali church grow, and compares it to the growth of the early Christian church as described in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>283</sup>

A few stories did imply a connection between deeds of compassion by foreign Christians and the conversion of Nepali people. For example, Tone Rusken told that the family of a young girl who they had treated for cancer and helped with funding at Tansen Mission Hospital had begun to attend the local church.<sup>284</sup> It was clear from her description that they had made the decision to become Christians independently of the missionaries, but her story implied that perhaps they had been inspired by the Christians' caring treatment of their daughter. This is one of the only concrete examples I found of a connection made in writing between mission work in practice and the conversion of specific individuals. In another interview, Tara, a young Christian Nepali girl interviewed for the magazine, is

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<sup>281</sup> For example, a description of a Nepali Christian youth meeting by missionary Helen Eikeland, in which the only actions she describes taking herself are bicycling to and from the meeting. Helen Eikeland, "Unge samles i den nepalske kirken/ Youth gather in the Nepali church," 2000.5, 8-9.

<sup>282</sup> Mirjam Bergh, "Nytt sjelesorgsenter i Nepal/ New counseling center in Nepal," 2010.4, 20.

<sup>283</sup> "...Hvor utrolig privilegerte vi har vært! Vi har fått delta i misjonsarbeid på en ny måte, og samtidig fått se evangeliet i funksjon på urkirkens vis. På tross av restriksjoner og motstand på mange vis fikk vi oppleve å se evangeliet slå rot og bære frukt, først bare langsomt og i det skjulte, men siden med en eksplosiv kraft..." "...What an incredible privilege we've had! We have gotten to participate in mission work in a new way, and at the same time gotten to see the Gospel working as it did in the early church. Despite restrictions and oppositions, in many ways we got to experience seeing the gospel take root and bear fruit, at first just slowly and in secret, but later with explosive power..." Tullis and Odd Hoftun, "Foredrag ved UMN's 50-års jubileum/ Lecture for UMN's 50-year anniversary," 2005.1, 5.

<sup>284</sup> Tone Rusken, "Jesu stordom i Nepal/ Jesus' greatness in Nepal," 2010.5, 15.

quoted as saying that the good deeds of Christians are a reason Nepali people become interested in Christianity.<sup>285</sup>

As discussed above,<sup>286</sup> there are some ways in which mission members carefully give examples of themselves as evangelists in practice, but without describing particular individuals being interested in Jesus through their witness. Instead, members of HimalPartner record observations of individuals receiving Christ, and rejoice over it as Gods work.<sup>287</sup>

Another indirect way of reflecting a connection between the mission's witness and the evangelism and growth of Nepali churches is to describe evangelism as a kind of "ripple effect."<sup>288</sup> For example, Bimala Pokharel writes, "...If we lead people to freedom with the help of the Lord's love, they will also end up showing the way for others."<sup>289</sup> Heidi illustrates the ripple effect idea with the example of a Nepali Christian organization explaining to the authorities that they were only helping others because the Bible told them to, not in order to convert them--upon which some of the officials became interested in reading the Bible.<sup>290</sup>

The Hoftuns in the above quote<sup>291</sup> and others in *Tibetaneren* repeatedly use the metaphor of seeds and fruit to describe the growth of the Nepali church, a Biblical reference that implies a certain kind of evangelistic cause and effect.<sup>292</sup> Asbjørn Voreland's very indirect and careful reference to the metaphor of having "planted seeds" years ago in an area where there is now a church is one of the most direct references to specific results of evangelism in the last 10 years of *Tibetaneren*--and even there, he avoids specifically describing himself as a sower or giving particulars.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Interview with Tara Bhusal in Bjørn Lyngroth, "Tara møtte Gud i Nepal/ Tara met God in Nepal," 2006.3, 10-11.

<sup>286</sup> See Dorothea Vestol cited in section 4.2.4.

<sup>287</sup> For example, Ragnhild Skeie, "Eit kraftsenter utanom det vanlege/An out-of-the-ordinary power house", 2010.5, 12-13; Torger Lode, "Starten på en solskinns historie/ The beginning of a happy story," 2004.1, 20.

<sup>288</sup> Heidi Westborg Steel, "Mobilisering/ Mobilization," 2010.2, 2.

<sup>289</sup> Bimala Pokharel, "Fri fra Slaveri/ Free from Slavery," 2010.2, 4-5.

<sup>290</sup> Heidi Westborg Steel, "Mobilisering/ Mobilization," 2010.2, 2.

<sup>291</sup> Tullis and Odd Hoftun, "Foredrag ved UMN's 50-års jubileum/ Lecture for UMN's 50-year anniversary," 2005.1, 5.

<sup>292</sup> "We have been able to help with the sowing, but it is God who has given growth." "Vi har fått være med å så, men det er Gud som har gitt vekst..." Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Misjon i omstilling/ Leader: Mission in Transition," 2000.3, 2.

<sup>293</sup> Asbjørn Voreland, "Noe falt i god jord/ Some fell in good soil," 2006.5, 14.

There are only a few hints that it was and is not always so easy to work as Christian missionaries in a country where evangelism is still forbidden.<sup>294</sup> For example, Eva Gilje writes,<sup>295</sup>

In Nepal we were to serve the Nepali people in the name and spirit of Jesus. Evangelism has been forbidden and difficult at times. So it's good to know that the care, love and practical help in work and free time that many have been able to show their fellow people [in Nepal] also has value as a witness to the faith we have.

#### 4.4.3 Division of labor with the Nepali church

Contributors to *Tibetaneren* describe the mission's relationship to the Nepali church in various ways that relate to their understanding of their own mission practice in word and deed. In some places contributors to *Tibetaneren* reflect on the mission of the Nepali church in ways parallel to the ways, described above, that they reflect on HimalPartner's calling and mission. For example, Tore Skeie dreams of the Nepali church as the "number one agent of change in Nepal," in the same way that others hoped that the mission's work could bring transformation through the power of the gospel.<sup>296</sup> The magazine writers often point to the mission practice of the Nepali churches as a sign of hope. For example, Oddvar Lund points to Nepali Christians' enthusiastic evangelism to their neighbors as an inspiration.<sup>297</sup> There are many other examples of members describing being inspired by the faith, manifestations of God's power in the lives of Nepali Christians, and the Nepali Christian church in *Tibetaneren*.<sup>298</sup>

Other members bring up the idea that mission in Nepal has "divided" the evangelistic and diaconal tasks of mission between foreign missionaries and Nepali Christians. In this understanding, foreign missionaries were to do diaconal work, while Nepali Christians

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<sup>294</sup>Tullis and Odd Hoftun, "Foredrag ved UMN's 50-års jubileum/ Lecture for UMN's 50-year anniversary," 2005.1, 7.

<sup>295</sup>"I Nepal skulle vi tjene det nepalske folket i Jesu navn og ånd. Det å forkynne har vært forbudt og vanskelig i perioder. Da er det godt å vite at den omsorg, kjærlighet og praktisk hjelp i arbeid og fritid som mange har fått vist sine medmennesker også har verdi som vitnesbyrd om troen vi har. Da jeg var språkstudent i Nepal våren 1992, kom vi til sykehuset i Tansen før landsbyopphold. Skiltet på nepali og engelsk som møtte oss utenfor misjonssykehuset i Tansen er et fint vitnesbyrd om hvordan misjonen ser på sin oppgave: "Vi tjener, Jesus helbreder." Eva Gilje, "Andakt: en rød kjærlighet på pinne/ Devotional: A red lollipop," 2004.2, 19.

<sup>296</sup>Tore Skeie, "Kva kan vi yta?/What can we contribute?" 2010.1, 8-9.

<sup>297</sup>Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Nasjonale Medarbeidere: en del av vår framtid? /Leader: National colleagues: part of our future?" 2004.1, 2.

<sup>298</sup>Gunnar og Evelyn Mollestad, "Guds kjærlighetsbrev til verden/ God's love letter to the world," 2009.6, 4-5.

evangelized.<sup>299</sup> Several articles directly address HimalPartner's conscious choice to leave church-planting to Nepalis, but to contribute in a low-key supporting role. For example, general secretary Grethe Raddum differentiates "church planting" from "church building."<sup>300</sup> Rather than directing the Nepali church through leadership positions, she writes that HimalPartner's missionaries have "contributed and given guidance...through testimonies, training, fellowship and participation." Raddum connects this to a desire to promote the growth of strongly "contextualized" churches that spring naturally from and fit sustainably into Nepali culture, rather than being dependent on foreign ideas and volunteers.<sup>301</sup>

Current general secretary Heidi Westborg Steel affirms Raddum's line of thought in a 2010.3 article, where she envisions HimalPartner supporting Nepali organizations that witness through Christian lives in service to others, first through prayer and then, if Nepalis themselves wish, as "fellow pilgrims."<sup>302</sup> Tore Skeie envisions HimalPartner as "one of the supporters" of the Nepali church's work for transformation.<sup>303</sup>

## 4.5 Reflections on the role of humans and God in mission

### 4.5.1 Mission in word and deed as a means of transforming injustice with the Gospel

In *Tibetaneren*, Mission in word and deed is described as a way of transforming poverty and injustice with the gospel. This faith in the transforming power of the gospel can be linked to individual Christians sharing in word and deed, for example expressed as a call for Nepali and expatriate Christians to be "salt and light" in Nepal. This call implies that their presence can make a difference.<sup>304</sup> Tore Skeie writes that people must be mobilized for change within

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<sup>299</sup>Jostein Holm, "Leder: ut av den bunnløse fattigdommen/ Leader: Out of the Bottomless Poverty," 2010.1, 2.

<sup>300</sup>"Tibetmisjonen har ikke ledet an i å "plante" menigheter og kirker, men har likevel vært med å bygge kirker og menigheter. Gjennom vitnesbyrd, opplæring, samliv og deltakelse har Tibetmisjonens utsendinger bidratt og veiledet." Grethe Raddum quoted in Bjørn Lyngroth's "Helhetlig misjon/ Holistic Mission," 2007.4, 10.

<sup>301</sup>Grethe Raddum quoted in Bjørn Lyngroth's "Helhetlig misjon/ Holistic Mission," 2007.4, 10.

<sup>302</sup>"medvandrerer." Heidi Westborg Steel, "Mobilisering/ Mobilization," 2010.2, 2.

<sup>303</sup>"Eg har ein draum om at det vert den kristne kyrkja som framstår som endringsagent nummer ein i Nepal. Tibetmisjonen kan vera ein av støttespelarane i denne prosessen!" "I have a dream that the Christian church will stand forth as the number one agent of change in Nepal. HimalPartner can be one of the supporters in this process!" Tore Skeie, "Kva ka vi yta/ What can we contribute?," 2010.1, 8-9.

<sup>304</sup>"We Christians are called to be salt, and salt acts as a counter-culture which tends both to sting and to influence what surrounds it." "Vi som kristne er kalt til å være salt, og saltets virkning er å være en motkultur som nok både svir og påvirker omgivelsene." Harald Eikeland, "Andakt: Vær den forandringen du vil se/ Devotional: Be the change you want to see," 2008.1, 3.



Nepal, and that the Christian church has perhaps the greatest potential as a "fellowship" to be an agent of change because of its tradition of holistic social work.<sup>305</sup>

In his exhortation to donors in 2002.1, Oddvar Lund argues that the mission is trying to create a better future for Nepal, and that they want missionaries to be "agents of change."<sup>306</sup> However, in the conclusion he splits the mission's work to create change into two, saying that they feel their diaconal work helps give the poor and underprivileged a future, while the message of the King coming with peace and justice also gives "a hope and a future."<sup>307</sup>

Statements about the problems in Nepal and their insurmountability by human efforts are often followed by a statement of faith and the potential of the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus in the specific context of suffering, poverty and social injustice in Nepal. Bjørn Ødegaard, for example, in the passage cited above, immediately contrasts his own feeble, short-term charity to Jesus' long-term solution of true healing and a kind of divine capacity building.<sup>308</sup> When some members refer to a terrible situation that they have experienced in Nepal, such as human trafficking, they do not claim to be able to change it once and for all, but state their belief that Jesus can bring hope into that situation. Bimala Pokharel, for example, writes of her hope that Jesus can "set people finally free," after human beings have done all they can to help victims of human trafficking.<sup>309</sup>

Member of HimalPartner also express belief that Jesus alone has the power to free entire societies from poverty and injustice. For example, Asbjørn Voreland writes that, "The only hope for the future of the world and for Nepal is Jesus! The Gospel destroys all boundaries, and we rejoice over an increasing number of people who have found courage to live and hope in Jesus' death and resurrection."<sup>310</sup> His longing is both very present in this time, and eschatological--relating to a future that will only come when Jesus returns. Bjørn Ødegaard means something similar when he says that, "In HimalPartner we have had

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<sup>305</sup> Tore Skeie, "Kva kan vi yta?/What can we contribute?" 2010.1, 8-9.

<sup>306</sup> Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Mission for framtiden/ Leader: Mission for the future," 2002.1, 2.

<sup>307</sup> Jeremiah, 29:10.

<sup>308</sup> "I Tibetmisjon har vi hatt yrkesmisjonærer som har hatt bade de timelige og åndelige perspektivene klart for seg." Bjørn Ødegaard, "Andakt: Dansen i Containeren/ Devotional: The Dance in the Dumpster," 2001.5, 14.

<sup>309</sup> Bimala Pokharel, "Fri fra Slaveri/Free from Slavery," 2010.2, 4-5.

<sup>310</sup> Asbjørn Voreland, "Jesus gir håp til Nepals undertrykte/ Jesus gives hope to Nepal's oppressed," 2000.3, 2-3.

"working missionaries" who have been clearly aware of both the temporal and spiritual perspectives."<sup>311</sup>

A 2000 Christmas letter by Leiv Bøyum expresses a mix of eschatological longing and present commitment to service, writing that the world is a big mix of good and bad and will be until Jesus, the Prince of Peace, comes back. In his words, we live in a "waiting time," but can choose to strengthen the good, and point to Jesus with "humble boldness."<sup>312</sup> Oddvar Lund echoes the same theology in 2002.1: "We are awaiting a king who will come with peace and justice, and until then we want to do our part of the work for a future in keeping with His good thoughts for all people. Will you join us?"<sup>313</sup> Both express a longing to see life following Jesus as something down-to-earth, practical, yet at the same time transcendent and connected to Gods coming kingdom.

#### *4.5.2 An Instrument of the Lord--Tibetaneren reflections on Missio Dei*

The idea that God is the central actor in mission comes out strongly and repeatedly in *Tibetaneren*. Heidi Westborg Steel once describes the mission's relationship to church growth as actually ambiguous.<sup>314</sup>

We have been allowed to join in seeing that the Nepali church has grown, and that several hundred thousand people have come to faith. [The question of] what of this is human work and what is God's work is one that we're glad to put in God's hands, but we still want to be an instrument of God in Nepal...

In many stories in *Tibetaneren*, missionaries and members do not attribute very much, if anything, to themselves, but instead to God and to others.<sup>315</sup> Heidi Westborg Steel writes,<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> "I Tibetmisjon har vi hatt yrkesmisjonærer som har hatt bade de timelige og åndelige perspektivene klart for seg." Bjørn Ødegaard, "Dansen i Containeren/ Devotional: The Dance in the Dumpster," 2001.5, 14.

<sup>312</sup> Leiv Bøyum, "Julehilsen: Fred på jord?/ Christmas letter: Peace on earth?" 2000.8, 12.

<sup>313</sup> "Vi venter en konge som skal komme med fred og rettferdighet, og frem til da ønsker vi å gjøre vår del av arbeidet for en fremtid mer i tråd med hans gode tanker for alle mennesker. Blir du med oss?" Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Mission for framtiden/ Leader: Mission for the future," 2002.1, 2.

<sup>314</sup> "Vi har fått være med å se at nepali-kirken har vokst, og at flere hundre tusen har kommet til tro. Hva av dette som er menneskets verk og hva som er Guds verk, er vi glade for å kunne legge over i Guds hånd men vi ønsker fortsatt å være et redskap for Gud i Nepal." Heidi Westborg Steel, "Misjon, religion og bistand/ Mission, religion and development," 2010.5, 5.

<sup>315</sup> The exception is in interviews and articles in honor of mission members, in which the author can praise a particular person.

<sup>316</sup> "Vi er ydmyke fordi Jesus virker gjennom, rundt og med oss. Det er Han som virker når kirken i Nepal bygges, og når landsmøtet fatter vedtak. Det er det samme under som skjer hver høst når et eple får vokse

We are humble because Jesus works through, around and with us. It is He who works when the church in Nepal is built, and when [HimalPartner's] general assembly passes a resolution. It is the same miracle that happens every autumn when an apple is allowed to grow forth and ripen. God creates, gives life and lets it have value as fruit. For this we pray.

There is a real sense in *Tibetaneren* that members of HimalPartner have been allowed or privileged by God to be minor participants in His exciting work. Tullis Hoftun, for example, uses the words "fikk delta," literally, "was allowed to participate" when describing her role in Nepali church growth.<sup>317</sup> Grethe Raddum describes the mission's theology of holistic mission as a gift from God that they weren't inspired to come up with themselves, but that grew out of the conditions they met in Nepal.<sup>318</sup> Along with the God-centeredness of mission is a theme of gratefulness in being able to see and participate in change and church growth, as His blessings. Grethe writes about the joy of work "where God has given the task."<sup>319</sup> Similarly, Andreas Kolaas writes,<sup>320</sup>

Let us encourage each other to follow the missionaries' work closely so that we can let ourselves be enriched when God creates something new through our continued service. We can expect that God will equip us for service and allow us to experience our service as enriching and faith-strengthening.

He implies that it is important not just that God "equips" and "allows" missionaries to participate in His work of "creating something new", but also important that God "allows" the mission members to feel that they have been enriched and strengthened in faith through their service.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

The chapter above cited some main themes and perspectives from HimalPartner's mission magazine *Tibetaneren* related to word and deed in mission. First, members understand

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frem og modnes. Gud skaper, gir liv og lar det få fruktens verdi. Det ber vi om." Heidi Westborg Steel, "Leder: det er makt i de foldede hender/ Leader: There is power in the folded hands," 2010.4, 2.

<sup>317</sup> Tullis and Odd Hoftun, "Foredrag ved UMN's 50-års jubileum/ Lecture for UMN's 50-year anniversary," 2005.1, 5.

<sup>318</sup> Grethe Raddum quoted in Bjørn Lyngroth's "Helhetlig misjon/ Holistic Mission", 2007.4, 10.

<sup>319</sup> Grethe Raddum, "Leder: en jobb å glede seg til/ Leader: a job to look forward to." 2003.3, 2.

<sup>320</sup> "La oss oppmuntre hverandre til å følge utsendingenes arbeid på nært hold slik at vi kan la oss berike når Gud skaper noe nytt gjennom den tjenesten vi står i...Vi kan forvente at Gud vil utruste oss til tjeneste og la oss få oppleve tjenesten som berikende og trosstyrkende." Andreas Kolaas, "Leder: er du preget av forventning?/ Leader: are you full of expectations?" 2008.3, 2.

mission in word and deed as a God-given, specific call to the mission. Second, they have various ways of describing their theology of "working mission," pointing to holism, naturalness and balance as ideals for both word and deed, as expressed in the idea of living such that ones' life "points to Jesus." A third important theme is the consideration of mission in word and deed as a Christian response to suffering. This is expressed in various ways in *Tibetaneren*--deeds of service as discipleship, love and solidarity, and mission as inadequate human beings meeting injustice with the transformational Gospel of Jesus. Finally, in their stories, contributors downplay the role of their own evangelism in Nepali church growth and emphasize the role of Nepali evangelists and the Holy Spirit. Through descriptions of their own limitations in evangelism and social involvement, the mission members emphasize the work and power of God to transform and save.

## 5. ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Introduction

The various perspectives that contributors to *Tibetaneren* bring up on word and deed in mission provide rich material for analysis. This chapter will reflect on HimalPartner's community theology of mission in word and deed, how it relates to Adeyemo and Bosch's categories from the Grand Rapids conference, and how the specific context of a Norwegian mission working in Nepal brings up challenges and questions not considered by the two Lausanne theologians.

### 5.2 *Tibetaneren* Community Theology

In what ways does the fact that *Tibetaneren* is a community of writers influence an understanding of their theology? Leaders of HimalPartner wrote that there was a range of differing viewpoints within HimalPartner with the potential for conflict.<sup>321</sup> In *Tibetaneren*, however, authors seem to make an effort to emphasize what holds the mission together, and there are few extremes or obviously incompatible viewpoints within the magazine.

Different parts of the magazine often include different kinds of reflection. While the people writing from the mission field tend to be more concrete and tell about fresh events in their daily lives, people at home in Norway tend to have more theoretical theological reflections based on previous experiences from which they have some distance. The "leader" and "devotional" sections are much more likely to include direct challenges or appeals to readers and the mission community to support the mission.

While each article can be analyzed separately, some articles clearly intend to give partial views of certain parts of the mission that complement other articles. It is also clear that some members had a certain role within *Tibetaneren*. For example, from 2000-2010 Odd Hoftun often wrote about political developments in Nepal, while Mia Voreland wrote updates about church growth. It would not make sense to see either alone as representative, either for the contributor's entire personal perspective on word and deed, or for the mission theology of the entire magazine.

One could argue that everything in the magazine has potential theological implications because it is a mission publication, and the contextual framework in which the

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<sup>321</sup> See 3.2.

reader interprets the text is Christian mission. A letter from a missionary may not make specific Christian references, but many readers might connect their descriptions of daily life to their idea of mission. For example, the magazine ran an article by NORAD<sup>322</sup> about an “unusually successful” hydropower development project in Nepal that the mission had supported.<sup>323</sup> The article is not written by a HimalPartner member and makes no mention of mission, but in the context of the magazine it sends a clear message that the HimalPartner has accomplished something good. The parts fitting together in the same mission magazine—personal, theoretical, journalistic--work together to create an overall impression of the mission that includes both evangelism and social involvement.<sup>324</sup> No one article or person has to do all of it alone. Thus, *Tibetaneren* as a community forum allows for diverse theological expressions of mission in word and deed as well as an overall sense of connectedness and unity.

### 5.3 Contrasting Contexts of HimalPartner and Lausanne

Comparing the perspectives in *Tibetaneren* to the theological categories from Grand Rapids entails comparing the thought of two very different communities. One is a small Norwegian community made up of diverse individuals with a common call. The other is a large international organization made up of representatives from many such smaller organizations with a common faith in Jesus. The delegates at Grand Rapids represented independent organizations with many different individual ways of working and understanding mission. The members of HimalPartner, on the other hand, see themselves as followers of a common call and participants in a specific common task that they can understand and relate to in a variety of ways as individuals.

Reflections on theology in practice tend to be less tidy than abstract theological reflections. While the Grand Rapids theologians were interested in creating a theological document that could inspire Christians around the world to mission, authors in *Tibetaneren* have many more potential purposes with their writing. In *Tibetaneren*, HimalPartner members are not generally trying to define the theological relationship between words and

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<sup>322</sup> Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

<sup>323</sup> Reprinted in *Tibetaneren* from NORAD report on energy aid, ed. Bjørn Lyngroth, "Uvanlig vellykket prosjekt/ Unusually successful project," 2008:1, 4.

<sup>324</sup> This idea of Christian community as a body and, among others, the verse 1 Corinthians 12: 4-31, were emphasized last year at HimalPartner's summer mission meeting titled "En Kropp"--"One Body."

deeds in a literal sense. Rather, they are discussing and describing their common context of specific life experiences in the mission and Nepal, in light of the Bible and their common Christian faith. The theologians at the Grand Rapids conference, on the other hand, had a somewhat different common context, one chiefly related to their common faith and enthusiasm for mission, and not related to a specific practice of concrete, practical action by the movement itself. Thus, while the Grand Rapids theologians use no concrete, specific examples from daily life to illustrate the applicability of their theology, writers in *Tibetaneren* can move between the abstract and the concrete. Many aspects of the theology in *Tibetaneren* analyzed below are deeply intertwined responses to the context of Nepal.

### *5.3.1 Call-driven inseparability of word and deed*

In what ways do members express a holistic understanding of mission, and in what ways are their understandings of mission divided? HimalPartner's community theology adopts a basic position that Adeyemo rejects: the idea that mission in word and deed are inseparable. It does not express the relationship of evangelism and social involvement in mission as a simplified question of "either/or" but as a more complex, and potentially paradoxical, whole. They do this by describing work as a form and means of natural witness and evangelism.

The members' belief in a shared call from God to share the gospel with the people of the Himalayas in word and deed is the theme that ties the various articles together. As found in Chapter 4, leaders, missionaries and members of the mission reference the mission statement in their articles. In doing so, contributors to *Tibetaneren* make mission in word and deed a spiritual imperative. The mission statement about sharing the gospel "in word and deed" is the center of an ongoing discussion on *how* one can and should live out that call, as individuals and as members of HimalPartner mission, as further examples will show.

The central emphasis in *Tibetaneren* on the mission statement make it clear that HimalPartner's priority is sharing the gospel of Jesus--in a holistic way that involves both word and deed. However, *Tibetaneren* articles come from a specific context where evangelism is the motivation but where the main *method* of mission cannot be verbal evangelism, but service. Therefore, their overall view of mission takes work as a starting point and puts much more emphasis on deeds than any of Adeyemo's perspectives.

Like Adeyemo and Bosch, HimalPartner members would certainly reject Adeyemo's categories A and B, that social action is a distraction from or betrayal of evangelism. With

such a perspective, they would never have even been able to enter Nepal as a "working mission," but would have had to find a completely different way of working. Adeyemo rejects his own option C--that idea that evangelism and social action are inseparable--because it does not make a sharp distinction between evangelism and social action.<sup>325</sup> Option C, however, is clearly applicable to the perspectives in *Tibetaneren*--in a modified form--in their emphasis on evangelism *through* service. Through their understanding of work and Christian life as a means of witness, HimalPartner members express actions as inseparable from sharing the gospel.

### 5.3.2 Holistic understandings of "working mission"

Without an integral understanding of work as witness, HimalPartner would not have been able to see their calling to work in Nepal as "working missionaries" as a response to Jesus' call to make disciples. Because of the HimalPartner's practical situation in Nepal, it takes as its starting point a practical role in which deeds and work are necessarily extremely important to the mission. This is not a scenario imagined by the evangelical theologians in Chapter 2.

Some in HimalPartner may understand service or diakonia as a means, bridge, or preparation to evangelism, as in Adeyemo's option D. However, in general, they tend not to express this kind of connection between motivations for service and evangelism in *Tibetaneren*. Instead, they emphasize the fact that work has value in itself and is never just an "excuse" to evangelize.<sup>326</sup> If service opens doors and relationships through which people can witness about Jesus, that is good, but serving others *solely* in order to convince them to become Christians would not be an "authentic" or "natural" Christian witness as expressed in *Tibetaneren*.

There are some articles where the mission only describes development work from a secular perspective, while others that emphasize the Nepali church. It is a rare article that emphasizes verbal evangelism alone. There are virtually no instances when someone in *Tibetaneren* advocates focusing on word or deed to the exclusion of the other, or claims that one is more important.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Adeyemo, "Critical Evaluation," 50.

<sup>326</sup> Oddvar Lund, "Leder: Misjon for framtiden/ Leader: Mission for the future," 2002.1, 2.

<sup>327</sup> Grethe Raddum apologizes (slightly tongue-in-cheek) for a one-time emphasis on the development efforts of mission, in the context of a Norwegian aid fundraising campaign. Grethe Raddum, "Leder: Håpløshet vendt til håp/ Hopelessness turned to hope," 2006.5, 2.



What do members mean when they speak of working mission as "natural," and how does this relate to their understanding of word and deed? In some ways, the word "natural," like "holistic" and "integral," is an apologetic term that modifies the word "mission," with its potential old connotations of imperialism, hypocrisy and stiffness, into something innocent, authentic and organic.<sup>328</sup> These articles are perhaps reacting to an outside perception of mission as something unnatural and forced, which they counter by expressing a sense of longing for integrity, and for Jesus to mean something in Christians' daily lives, not just in the exotic but also in the familiar. Here, everything becomes one holistic mission because the inner life and motivations of the mission members, as Dorothea puts it, "dribble out," both in words and actions.<sup>329</sup> In this understanding of mission, word and deed are truly inseparable because both spring unconsciously and uncontrollably from a person's personal faith and relationship to Jesus.

Being a Christian witness is not, in the HimalPartner communities' understanding, something that one needs to go abroad to do. This connects, I think, to a desire to experience mission not as a vague, shining, impossibly perfect--and potentially condescending and imperialistic--movie-saint endeavor, but something down-to-earth and authentically incarnational that involves meeting other people as a real person.<sup>330</sup>

In these senses, HimalPartner's community expresses views of mission that are holistic in a way that Adeyemo's categories don't begin to approach, but which the *Cape Town Commitment* emphasizes--mission in which word and deed are the witness of an authentic life with Jesus.

### *5.3.3 Understandings of word and deed as separate partners*

*Tibetaneren's* community theology encompasses both the greater longing for wholeness in mission theology and practice that David Bosch advocates and traces of the division between word and deed that he criticizes.

HimalPartner's common call to "share the gospel in word and deed" does allow for many different interpretations. For example, the question can be asked whether the idea of "mission in word and deed" implies a call to mission in which the two are never separated, as

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<sup>328</sup> They may be following the Enlightenment way of thinking here, still powerful today, in which 'the natural' is considered right and good.

<sup>329</sup> Interview with Dorothea Vestøl, unattributed article, "Naturlig Vitnetjeneste/ Natural Witnesses," 2001.6, 7.

<sup>330</sup> Heidi Westborg Steel, "Vi er da ganske allright/ We're pretty ok," 2009.6, 2

in category C of Adeyemo's list, or two "separate but equal" callings to evangelism and social service.

At times, a split perspective is present in the particular sentence structure contributors to *Tibetaneren* use to describe the missions' work.<sup>331</sup> For example, Bjørn Lyngroth wrote that holistic mission "combined witness through word and deed with practical and neighbor-loving aid to self-help."<sup>332</sup> Although Lyngroth's point is that mission involves both evangelism and social involvement, his way of describing it indirectly suggests that word and deed are two separate things that HimalPartner has "combined." It is unclear in such case whether contributors are always making a real distinction between two aspects of their mission that they see as separate, or are simply struggling to articulate a holistic theology.<sup>333</sup> In some ways the very emphasis on holism suggests a tension in which the mission is trying to work towards being whole.

It seems that some members would agree that there is a distinction between evangelism (as verbal witnessing to Jesus) and service, even if service involves a form of witness. *Tibetaneren* contributors also, consciously or not, tend to split descriptions of the Nepali churches' evangelism and the missionaries' development work into separate articles. This division reflects the particular reality of work in Nepal, which I have described in Chapter 3. Thus, in some ways the community discussion in *Tibetaneren* fits into Adeyemo's perspective H--that "social action and evangelism are equally important but genuinely distinct aspects of the total mission of the church." This is similar to the division between articles about the mission's work and articles about Nepali church growth, discussed below.<sup>334</sup>

#### 5.3.4 Mission as a Response to Suffering

Adeyemo's perspectives and the original Lausanne document barely address mission as a Christian response to suffering, despite the fact that this perspective is an extremely common one both historically and currently among mission societies worldwide. One can assume that

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<sup>331</sup> See 4.2.2

<sup>332</sup> See 4.2.1, "Misjon i Tibetmisjonens regi har alltid vært preget av helhetlig syn på livet, mennesket og misjon. Denne misjonsforståelsen kombinerer forkynnelse gjennom ord og gjerning med praktisk og nestekjærlig hjelp til selvhjelp." Bjørn Lyngroth, "Helhetlig Misjon/ Holistic Mission," 2007.4, 10.

<sup>333</sup> It may also be harder to recognize integral expressions of mission than the areas in which two different things appear to be slightly in tension.

<sup>334</sup> See section 5.3.6.

this is because the evangelical movement was reacting to what they saw as the extreme secularization and politicization of the ecumenical movement in its emphasis on social action. In *Tibetaneren*, however, HimalPartner members' reflections on the mission as a response to suffering and injustice are extremely important to their understanding of mission in word and deed due to their context in Nepal. Sigrun Møgedal uses the words "landevei" or "rural road" and "side of the road" imply that Jesus calls Christians to take the Gospel to remote, out-of-the-way places where poverty and need are obvious realities.<sup>335</sup> The response to this call fits in both with the diaconal idea of comforting and healing broken and needy people and the idea of solidarity, of "bearing others' burdens."<sup>336</sup>

In *Tibetaneren*, descriptions of suffering in Nepal are both earnest expressions of the missionaries' own response to the realities of life in Nepal and also clearly function as calls for support from Norway. This does not often come out directly in the missionary letters, which tend only to describe realities and to ask for prayer. But a call for financial and volunteer support, and also for potential missionaries, is often made explicit in the "leader" columns.<sup>337</sup> In doing so they, like the NMS mission articles Marianne Gullestad analyzes, excite both compassion and pity in the readers--the latter which can be dehumanizing, especially when aiding people in need is seen only as a means to gain their trust and encourage their conversion.<sup>338</sup>

That is perhaps why compassion and love are not the main ways that social involvement is described in *Tibetaneren*--to avoid portraying Nepali people as passive recipients of charity. In *Tibetaneren*, a Christian response to injustice and poverty is described in a more complex way--both as action in obedience to God's command, as integral expressions of Christian faith and solidarity with others, and as witnesses to the nature of God that may potentially inspire people to faith in Him. Kolaas' emphasis on the idea that "faith without works is dead" is very similar to that of the *Cape Town Commitment*.

Asbjørn Voreland's story about the slave girl Maila and Bjørn Ødegaard's about the man dancing in the dumpster bring up an aching dilemma--Jesus commands us to serve the needy as himself, but what if His followers are or feel powerless to really help them? In one

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<sup>335</sup> See 4.3.1. Sigrun Møgedal, "Tanker om Misjon: Disipler på landeveien/Thoughts about mission: disciples on the country road," 2002.1, 3.

<sup>336</sup> Matthew 22:36-40

<sup>337</sup> For example, Grethe Raddum, "Leder: Skatten i ei leirpote/ Leader: Treasure in a clay jar," 2000.6, 2.

<sup>338</sup> However, Gullestad adds that she believes these to be unintentional side-effects rather than the missionaries' initial intention. Gullestad, *Pity*, 3, 22.

sense, stories of unmet need function as a call to support the mission's continuing work. In another, stronger sense, stories of human inadequacy and even failure to help the community's understanding of mission from becoming too heavily focused on human works or some kind of 'salvation through progress,' and lead back to the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and the centrality of Jesus Christ. There is a sense of helplessness, dependency on Jesus, as expressed in the "working and waiting for the Prince of Peace who can really fix this world" examples, but it is not as extreme as the sense of dependency on the Holy Spirit in the mission's evangelism.

It is perhaps ironic that a magazine that is a major advertisement for a mission should advertise its own inadequacy--but it is also effective. HimalPartner mission supporters, *Tibetaneren* seems to suggest, aren't cheering for a gang of superheroes who are out to save the world, or a group of pompous experts, but a community of "everyday Christians" that believe in a God who cares for mankind and creation and is working through people and the Holy Spirit to save the world. The "smallness" of the role of mission members in their writing makes a good counter to the common postcolonial criticism that Christian missions have often been guilty of paternalism and misuse of power.

Many of the themes on mission as a response to suffering expressed in the last ten years of *Tibetaneren* have parallels to statements in the latest Lausanne movement document, the Cape Town Commitment.<sup>339</sup> The Commitment expresses a holistic faith in practice and emphasis on social justice as a reflection of God's love<sup>340</sup>, obedience to Christ's call and command,<sup>341</sup> true discipleship of Jesus,<sup>342</sup> a witness,<sup>343</sup> and a response to the Bible,<sup>344</sup> and a part of the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>345</sup> While the mission magazine *Tibetaneren* has by nature always related theology to a specific context and practice, Cape Town, unlike previous Lausanne conferences, makes an effort to focus on specific issues in the world that Christians are called to address in the world, such as the AIDs epidemic, environmental destruction and

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<sup>339</sup> See 2.3.

<sup>340</sup> "...To reflect the love and justice of God in practical love and justice for the needy..." *Cape Town*, 15.

<sup>341</sup> The Cape Town document advocates "costly practical obedience to God through Christ," frequently emphasizing that faith and "love" don't amount to much without practical obedience...And that "just lives are those that follow Christ..." *Cape Town*, 13, 16.

<sup>342</sup> "IIA 1.a (1) As disciples of Christ...we must *live* the truth..." Cape Town Commitment, 22.

<sup>343</sup> "Nothing commends the Gospel more eloquently than a transformed life..." Cape Town Commitment, 14.

<sup>344</sup> Cape Town Commitment, 13.

<sup>345</sup> For example, "When Christians love in the reconciled unity of love by the power of the Holy Spirit, the world will come to know Jesus, whose disciples we are..." Cape Town Commitment, 49.

human trafficking. Thus, the community of theology of HimalPartner in the past ten years parallels major global evangelical developments in the Lausanne movement since the Grand Rapids conference, as expressed in Cape Town.<sup>346</sup>

### 5.3.5 *Eschatology and Mission as work for the Kingdom of God*

The theme of the "transforming Gospel" is one of the most striking ways that HimalPartner members connect their faith and practice. It also has the theological implications that have perhaps historically been the most controversial and explosive, because they involve Christians in struggles with far-reaching political and economic implications.<sup>347</sup> Because HimalPartner's community theology clearly emphasizes the importance of social involvement, they have to deal with some of the eschatological questions that those who focus more on verbal evangelism may avoid.

Liberation theology is not a tradition that HimalPartner members directly or specifically identify themselves with in *Tibetaneren*. However, there are many obvious parallels<sup>348</sup> to liberation theology in the research, such as many HimalPartner members' emphasis on solidarity with the poor and on the justice and righteousness of the coming reign of Christ.<sup>349</sup> Consistent with their holistic view of mission in which evangelism and social action are inseparable, they see Jesus as the answer to intertwined spiritual and material problems. Does *Tibetaneren* portray, "evangelism as politics because salvation is social justice?" as in Bosch's perspective C.3?<sup>350</sup> Bosch says that evangelicals would reject this perspective, likely because it might imply that salvation is a human work, and thus confuse or replace the saving work of Jesus with human sociopolitical action--perspectives popular

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<sup>346</sup> Since most of my research was done before the commitment was made public, it was very exciting to see so many similarities!

<sup>347</sup> Indeed, several *Tibetaneren* writers use the word "explosive" to describe the power of the Christian Gospel--for example, Harald and Helen Eikeland say in an interview, "We believe that the gospel of equality, and liberty for all has revolutionary explosive power here." "Vi har tro på at her har evangeliet om likhet og frihet for alle revolusjonerende sprengkraft." Odd Aksnes, "Med Hjertet for Nepals Unge/ With a Heart for Nepal's Youth," 2002.1, 4.

<sup>348</sup> The emphasis in *Tibetaneren* on the global contrast between rich and poor, (Bosch, *Transforming*, 434) and on systematic injustice both in Nepal and on a global level (Bosch *Transforming*, 432), as well as their desire to work on a grassroots level (Bosch, *Transforming*, 438) certainly fit with Bosch's description of liberation theology, as does the idea of "integral liberation"--both spiritual and socio-economic transformation through the gospel (Bosch, *Transforming*, 442.)

<sup>349</sup> It makes much sense that HimalPartner, whose theology developed in the developing country of Nepal in the context of poverty and systematic injustice, would have many similarities to liberation theology that grew under similar conditions in countries like South Africa and El Salvador.

<sup>350</sup> Bosch cited in Adeyemo, "Critical Perspectives," 51.

with some branches of liberation theology. With their call to witness to Jesus as the world's Savior, most HimalPartner members would likely reject this interpretation of evangelism as politics as well. Most are careful to make it clear in *Tibetaneren* that they do not believe that Christians themselves can bring about God's kingdom on earth.

But in some senses, *Tibetaneren* could be seen as describing salvation as social justice--that is, by describing the Christian gospel as something that transforms individuals and societies to be more righteous and just, and God's coming kingdom as one of justice, healing and peace. Adeyemo's idea F that social action is a consequence of evangelism is clearly important to many HimalPartner members' understandings of how the *results* of mission transform individuals spiritually and socially, through the so-called ripple effect. The views from *Tibetaneren* on mission as a source of the transforming Gospel and as an instrument of the Lord<sup>351</sup> express a hope that witness to the Gospel in word and deed can lead to a social revival in Nepal like that catalyzed by Hans Nielsen Hauge's ministry. But contributors to *Tibetaneren* go much farther than Adeyemo in expressing the transforming effects of the gospel of Jesus, embracing *missio dei* through which the Holy Spirit transforms individuals and society, and emphasizing the future kingdom of God.

At the same time, theology of social involvement in *Tibetaneren* diverges distinctly from the type of liberation theology that evangelicals described in Chapter 2 react most strongly against: specifically, in their view of the role of humans in *missio dei*, the nature of salvation and their eschatological perspective on the kingdom of God. While positive to human social involvement, contributors to *Tibetaneren* are modest about the results of their efforts and the prospects for radical social change in their lifetimes, pointing to the reign of Christ as a longed-for but possibly distant relief. In the context of eschatological perspectives on injustice, their view of mission tends to divide, not into human words and deeds, but rather into human actions and God's actions. It seems that most HimalPartner members agree that the kingdom of God is related to transformations that we can join Him in working for now, but the kingdom will finally be radical transformation that only Jesus can bring and that we can only pray for and look forward to. What comes out in *Tibetaneren* is both hope that Jesus can transform individuals heart's, a larger hope that in doing so He can miraculously transform unjust societies in the present time, and a long-term hope and longing for the

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<sup>351</sup>See 4.5.

kingdom of God and for the just and peaceful reign of Christ.<sup>352</sup> This integrates their holistic/work-driven mission theology, faith in Jesus and their potential sense of inadequacy with regards to practical results.

#### *5.3.6 Relationship between evangelism and church growth in context*

Due to Nepali government restrictions foreign missions such as HimalPartner functioned as development organizations. Thus, one has the unusual situation of a division, not between development work and evangelism, but between working witness and the church-planting fruits of evangelism. The community theology with regards to the Nepali church is rather different than that with regards to social involvement in Nepal. Descriptions of Nepali church growth in *Tibetaneren* have an even stronger emphasis on the belief that great transformations are brought about by the power of God, not by missionaries.

The HimalPartner missionaries seem excited and grateful to see the growth and enthusiasm of the Nepali church but are very careful not to actively try to influence or control it. In contrast to the mission's head-on confrontation of social issues, there is a deep ambiguity and quietness in *Tibetaneren* about the evangelical work of the mission in concrete practice, and its results.

Many contributors to *Tibetaneren* emphasize their calling as evangelists in their more abstract reflections while describing few specifics. There were no stories in *Tibetaneren* where a missionary specifically connected their own actions or words to the conversion of a Nepali friend to Christianity. While they are clearly in part telling stories of the Nepali church as success stories, as an encouragement to friends of the mission, contributors to *Tibetaneren* do not claim the church growth as their own work. This somewhat paradoxical approach is related to the specific restrictions on evangelism and conditions in Nepal under which HimalPartner's theology has developed.

The fact that members of HimalPartner did not write about specific results of evangelism certainly does not imply that the missionaries' presence is unimportant. Nor does it mean that their emphasis on evangelism was hollow, or even necessarily that HimalPartner missionaries have not had specific experiences of being important for individuals seeking

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<sup>352</sup> Gunnar Johnsen, "Fattige opp av støvet og asken/ Poor raised from the dust and ashes," 2001.3 4-7.

Jesus.<sup>353</sup> Kehrberg's research implies the exact opposite--according to her data, the example and witness of foreign Christians--who were careful to obey the anti-proselytism laws--was in many cases an important source of information and encouragement for Nepali seekers interested in Christianity.<sup>354</sup> Perhaps some contributors to *Tibetaneren* did indeed have personal experiences of seeing their witness "bear fruit," but chose not to describe this in the mission magazine due to the restrictions in Nepal.<sup>355</sup>

Through the images of seeds and sowing, HimalPartner members give a Biblical framework for their humble evangelistic role in God's mission.<sup>356</sup> These images of seeds and "sowing the Word" are very similar to central images Gullestad found in her research on another Norwegian mission's writings about their work in Cameroon.<sup>357</sup> But unlike NMS publications, HimalPartner does not talk about "planting" churches. Instead, it uses the agricultural metaphor in a more specific, contextual way. HimalPartner members portray their witness as seed-sowing, with all the limitations that come with that image--imply that they may have been able to witness in some small ways that, combined with the witness of others and "watered" by the Holy Spirit, have later led to the "fruit" of Nepali people converting to Christianity--but not by their own effort. This cautious explanation is not satisfying without the context of mission members' faith in a God who truly does work wonders.

### *5.3.7 Division of Labor with Nepali church?*

Another practical reality of the mission is that due to government restrictions, foreign missionaries and Nepali Christians witnessed in different ways and had different roles. It was important for missionaries to see themselves as supporters of, but at the same time detached from, Nepalis choosing to become Christians. At the same time, as shown above, HimalPartner has a very strong holistic understanding of mission and members practiced evangelism. The section below will reflect on HimalPartner's practical relationship or

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<sup>353</sup> During my short stay in Nepal, I met several people who were inspired to read the Bible and seek Jesus through friendships with foreign missionaries.

<sup>354</sup> Kehrberg, *Cross*, 152-153; Rongong Manuscript, chapter on "The Role of Expatriates in the History of the Church."

<sup>355</sup> This de-emphasis on missionary roles can also be read as a conscious effort toward the Christian virtue of humility, and may be related to Norwegian cultural understandings.

<sup>356</sup> For example, Jesus' parable of the sower and the seeds, in Matthew 13:3-23, Mark 4:2-20, Luke 8: 4-15.

<sup>357</sup> "All through the twentieth century, missionaries have used the central biblical metaphors of planting the seed, toiling in the field and harvesting the crop." Gullestad, *Pity*, 135-6.



partnership with Nepali churches as expressed in *Tibetaneren*, and how this fits into or exists in tension with their holistic view of mission.

In one sense, the division between the mission and Nepali Christians is part of the mission's understanding of itself as part of a worldwide body of Christ with many members that have different jobs. As explained above, HimalPartner missionaries saw themselves as part of a much larger group, both UMN and the Nepali church, in which evangelistic responsibilities were shared. Even if they felt their own witness had had some effect, it would in many cases not be right to take credit for the results.

In another sense, the division is a reflection of a particular understanding of the role of foreigners and Nepalis in which the mission has consciously encouraged Nepali Christians to do all church leadership and church planting. This emphasis on Nepali church independence creates a practical dichotomy between the work of church and mission and thus a practical split within the mission's own theology between evangelism and church-planting. Raddum describes missionaries place on the "sidelines" of church growth not as a failure or limitation due to conditions, but as a strength of their methods of witness.<sup>358</sup> This emphasis on contextualization and Nepali church independence was also strongly reflected in my informal conversations with mission members in Nepal.<sup>359</sup>

But the idea of "dividing the labor" of diakonia and evangelism also points to a potential tension with the mission's emphasis on holistic and natural mission and their practice in the specific context of Nepal. One could see the emphasis on Nepalis witnessing to Nepalis as being in tension with one traditional understanding of HimalPartner's strong personal sense of calling to evangelism and action described above. But stories of inspiration from the Nepali church fit in well with the ideas discussed of a "balanced" world-wide call for all Christians, and the idea of "natural", everyday, everyman's mission in which one meets others as equals.

### 5.3.8 *Missio Dei*

In *Tibetaneren*, members' articles consciously express (and unconsciously reveal) certain tensions in their theology and practice. Mission members' statements about their strong desire to contribute to the spread of the gospel contrasts with their portrayal of church

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<sup>358</sup> Grethe Raddum quoted in Bjørn Lyngroth's "Helhetlig misjon/ Holistic Mission", 2007.4, 10.

<sup>359</sup> Heidi Westborg Steel, "Mobilisering/ Mobilization," 2010.2, 2; Conversation with Mirjam Bergh, 29 January, 2011.

growth in Nepal as something more or less independent. Likewise, descriptions of the mission's call and sense of responsibility to show solidarity and aid development in Nepal contrast with their descriptions of ongoing need and occasional admissions of human inadequacy in the face of immense social problems.

The theme that brings together these potentially conflicting elements is that God, not human beings, is central in mission. I believe the uncertainty faced by early mission members waiting to enter Nepal--and HimalPartner's sensitive position throughout their work in Nepal under the evangelism ban and as a small Norwegian mission partnering many other Nepali and foreign colleagues strengthened their faith in God as the central actor in mission.

The idea of *missio dei* helps address the question of potential imbalances between word and deed, both within the mission and for HimalPartner as a whole. If one individual or mission organization overemphasizes word or deed, God, as understood by mission members, can inspire another member to balance with a complementary witness. Thus, the idea of *missio dei* strengthens to the idea of mission as a global Christian community, "one body" with many members connected to the head, Jesus Christ. HimalPartner's *missio dei* perspective takes into account that motivations, contexts and results of mission may differ, but the central one is Jesus Christ.<sup>360</sup>

Many HimalPartner members describe a faith in *Tibetaneren* that God is working through church growth and social change---both through their efforts, the work and witness of others, and in His own mysterious ways--to transform the world and their specific context and community in Norway and Nepal. The *missio dei* perspective reminds readers that while the way Christians reflect on and practice mission is extremely important, it is not actually the most important consideration in a theology of mission--what is even more important is God's will and role. Perhaps the most important claim of the community theology of HimalPartner is that in word and deed they are participating in God's mission for and among mankind.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The Norwegian mission HimalPartner as expressed in *Tibetaneren* is a community with diverse perspectives on mission in word and deed, within which one can see multiple complementary themes. In some senses their theology is intrinsically holistic: they have a

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<sup>360</sup> Phillipians 1:18.

common call that includes both word and deed, and an evangelical understanding of "working mission" that emphasizes work as a form of evangelism. In other senses there are divisions, both in subtle expressions of evangelism and social action as two separate things and in larger divisions between development and church growth, and the actions and results of mission.

HimalPartner's community theology represents a change from Grand Rapids' heavy emphasis on evangelism and extreme separation of word and deed in that it emphasizes social involvement as part of an authentic Christian life and as a main form of Christian witness in Nepal. In addition, contributors to *Tibetaneren* emphasize mission as a Christian response of solidarity and faith to suffering and injustice in Nepal, a perspective not considered by Adeyemo. In the mission's community theology on a Christian responses to suffering, the emphasis is on mission as solidarity and on a perspective in which people are working and waiting for God's transforming salvation and future kingdom. Members' perspectives are both positive to Christian social involvement and careful to emphasize that only God can bring true transformation--a perspective that answers an eschatological question troubling to evangelical theologians in the Lausanne movement.

The contrast between motivations for evangelism and their results in *Tibetaneren* can be explained in the context of an independent and persecuted Nepali church, and does not necessarily mean that the mission's evangelistic efforts are unfruitful. The idea of division of mission labor with the Nepali church is in tension to some degree with the Norwegian HimalPartner' community's drive for holism in their own mission's word and deed. Finally, the mission's understanding of mission is centered on God as the "alpha and omega"--the motivation and main actor of Christian mission, who can work through human and contextual limitations, and who gathers Christians of all nations in one body in Christ.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored how the community of the Norwegian mission HimalPartner has reflected on the relationship between words and deeds in their mission practice in Nepal in their mission magazine, *Tibetaneren* during the past ten years. The research did not present different theologies of mission within HimalPartner, but a number of potentially complementary perspectives in which different authors express the relationship between

word and deed in different ways within a community theological process. In *Tibetaneren*, the relationship of word and deed in mission is portrayed both as a balance that each individual must consider and a task and calling that Christians as a community can share in practice.

*Tibetaneren* both fits into and challenges the international context of evangelical discussion about the nature of mission and the relationship between word and deed. HimalPartner's community theology, as Grethe Raddum writes, is not necessarily one that the mission would have chosen had it not been for the specific conditions and limitations in Nepal.<sup>361</sup> But in *Tibetaneren*, HimalPartner's community describes their mission theology and practice in a way that is also globally relevant: as a natural, authentic witness in word and deed springing from faith in the power of Jesus to save and transform.

As a specific community in context, HimalPartner's theology of mission differs from the abstract discussion at Grand Rapids in their emphasis on work as a main form of witness and mission as a response to suffering. Their descriptions of evangelism and church growth emphasize the role of the Nepali church and the Lord rather than the role of foreign missionaries. Their understanding of social involvement emphasize both a responsibility to help in solidarity with the Nepali people, the transforming power of the Gospel and the coming kingdom of God. Finally, throughout their reflections contributors to *Tibetaneren* rejoiced and expressed faith in the power of *missio dei*, the mission of God, beyond human expectations, efforts and understanding.

Through the mission community forum of *Tibetaneren*, members of HimalPartner unify a complex diversity of theological perspectives on word and deed in their theology and practice of working mission, through faith.

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<sup>361</sup> Grethe Raddum quoted in Bjørn Lyngroth's "Helhetlig misjon/ Holistic Mission", 2007.4, 10.

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